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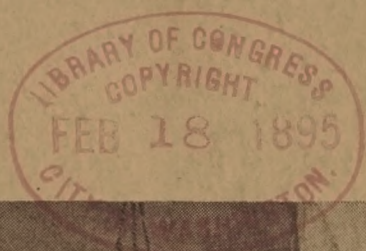
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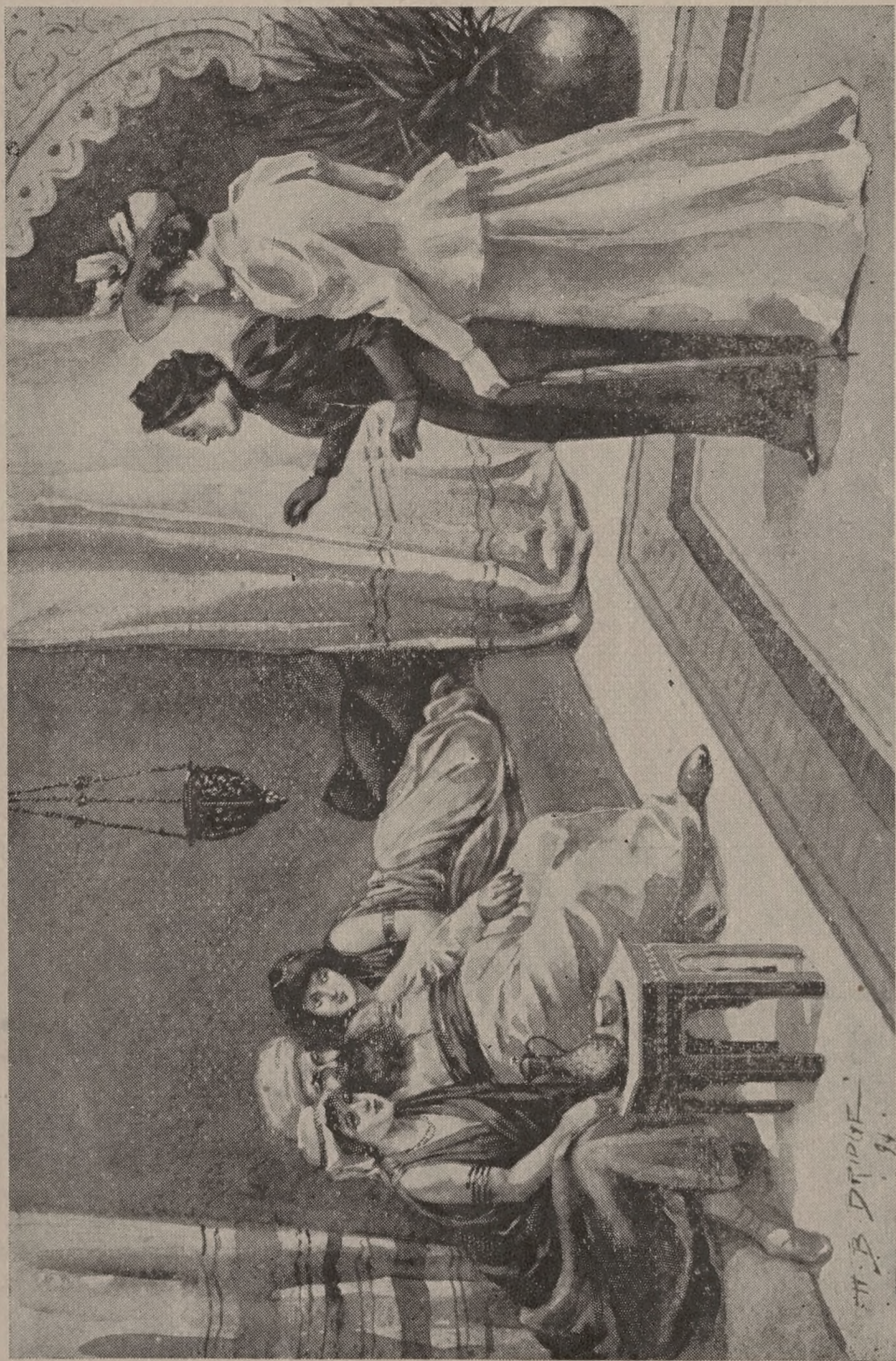












“Wal, ain’t he a peony—in full bloom!” cried Nelly.



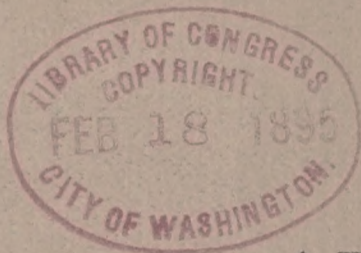
# HIS EGYPTIAN WIFE

AN ANGLO-EGYPTIAN ROMANCE

BY

HILTON HILL

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# HIS EGYPTIAN WIFE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A HAPPY DINNER-PARTY.

ON a delightful afternoon late in May, not long after the year of Her Majesty's Jubilee, two men seated in a first-class carriage on the five o'clock Windsor express, were seen to be in animated conversation.

The elder traveller, with the shiny bald head, was Sir Richard Brattle, Q. C., a fresh-faced, clean-shaven, sandy-gray haired, keen-looking little man of five-and-fifty. The younger was his godson, Lieutenant Sidney Dane, who had just returned from a long cruise in H. M. S. *Psyche*. They were on their way to the eminent advocate's country mansion on the Thames, opposite Chertsey.

Sir Richard regarded his companion with a look of pleasure; and, in a doting, paternal tone, said: "Well, well, Sidney, I'm really glad to see you back again."

"You are very kind to say so, Sir Richard."

"How long have you been gone?"

"Two years."

"Is it so long? And you have been round the world?"



“Not quite, but nearly. We crossed the Equator twice. If we had come home by Suez, we should have completed the circle.”

“And how do you like Her Majesty’s service?”

“Fairly well.”

“Which means, I suppose, that you are not in love with it, eh?”

“Well, no, I’m not. The Navy’s an idle life; it’s no place for a poor, ambitious man. There are so few opportunities for advancement, that when the slightest chance for an exploit presents itself, we all go for it as sharks go for a dead coolie.”

“Yes, yes, I can quite understand that, my boy. I always say that our next naval battle will either be a dashing, brilliant victory, or a disastrous defeat, probably the latter; for our sea-dogs of war have been so long held in check, that when the time comes, their impetuous valour will outrun their prudence.”

“We don’t think so; we’d like to try, at any rate.”

“You all pray for war, I daresay, as regularly as the clergy pray for peace.”

“We hope for it, at all events.”

“Well, well, Sidney, I can’t help looking at you. You’re so like your lamented father. It seems to me as if I were again chatting with my old chum of thirty years ago. For it’s just thirty years since your father and I came down from the North country together; he a poor doctor, and I a briefless barrister. Ha, what glorious careers we had planned for ourselves!”

“And you have achieved yours, Sir Richard.”

“Well, yes! I should be satisfied—and I am. He, poor chap, was just mounting the steps of fame, when he fell by the way. Ah, well! one can’t help lamenting sometimes. For it is a rare and gratifying privilege



to share and enjoy the sweet success of maturity with the companions of our youth."

There was a pathetic sadness in the senior's voice that caused the two men to look in opposite directions. Sidney's dark blue eyes moistened at this tender reminder of his beloved father.

Lieutenant Dane was a sturdy, open-faced young fellow of three-and-twenty. His naturally dark skin was bronzed like a russet pear. He was well above the medium height, but his muscular frame misled one as to his real stature.

After the brief silence, caused by the sympathetic allusion to the past, the young man said:

"I beg your pardon, Sir Richard, but I quite forgot to inquire after Lady Brattle; I hope she is quite well."

"Yes, thank you; at least, she was so the last time I heard from her. She's away from home at present, on a short visit to Lady August."

"Oh, then we shall be quite alone?" observed Sidney.

"Oh, no, my niece is at home."

"Your niece? I didn't know you had a niece."

"My wife's niece, Elsie Lisle. She was at school in Switzerland when you visited us three years ago."

"Oh, yes. I remember now Lady Brattle showing me her photograph. A plump, round-cheeked little school-girl."

"She's improved on that form now. But here we are at Staines," cried Sir Richard, as the train dashed into the station; "you shall soon judge for yourself, for she drives over for me in the phaeton every night, rain or shine. She's a Viking to face the weather."

When they got out of the station, there were about



a dozen family vehicles,—the smart coupe of the great brewer, the open victoria and pair of the stock-broker, the showy trap of the turf commission agent, and the modest pony phaeton of the Q. C.,—all drawn up by the roadside to meet the home-coming City men who lived in the neighbourhood.

There was a general bowing to and greeting of the famous Q. C., as he and Sidney made their way among the throng.

“There she is, Sidney. She doesn’t see us, though, for young Tom Pleet is talking to her,” said Sir Richard, indicating a fair young woman, by a nod of his head. “Pleet’s a bit mashed, as you youngsters say, I fancy.”

As they approached the phaeton, the girl turned and recognized them.

“Oh, Uncle Dick,” she cried, “I thought you had missed your train.”

“No. We stopped a moment to order Sidney’s trap to be sent over.” Then he introduced the young couple.

“This is Sidney Dane, Elsie, and this Fraulein Elsie Lisle, Sidney——”

“Now, Uncle, please don’t call me Fraulein,” said the girl, with a charmingly petulant protest. “It’s all well enough among ourselves, but——”

“Well, pet, it *is* among ourselves, for Sidney I almost look upon as my own lad. Now drive on, my pretty whip, for to-day I shall relish my dinner.”

The young people had murmured the usual complimentary words of greeting, and Sidney had been seated beside the fair creature who held the reins, her uncle facing them.

Sidney wondered if this could possibly be the awkward, chubby-faced girl, whose photo he had seen



three years before. Elsie Lisle, while not altogether a beauty, was now a plump, but still shapely, charming, light-haired girl of nineteen. Her hair was not exactly the fashionable blonde, between straw and amber; its crinkly strands gleamed golden in the sunlight. Her eyes were light-hazel, round as a fawn's, and her complexion was fresh and healthy, even to her neck and throat, which were somewhat tanned, but her cheeks were tinted as a pippin is tinted by wholesome exposure to sun and air. She was not above the medium stature, Sidney thought, as he regarded her, and her hands were not very small, but her nose took his fancy, for it was almost a perfect Grecian.

She managed the spirited little pony with such dextrous ease, that, Sidney after some general remarks, ventured to say:

"You're fond of driving, I should judge, Miss Lisle."

"Oh, yes, I like all outdoor sports. And it's great fun to drive Ginger; he fancies himself so much that he thinks he should distance every nag on the road. He's a bundle of conceit. If his legs were only equal to his vanity, he'd be a priceless pony—but they're not."

"You handle him with the skill and ease of an experienced whip," observed Sidney.

"Oh, we know each other, Ginger and I."

"But does he never attempt to bolt with you?"

"He tried it once, but he knows better than to attempt it again."

"She nearly broke his jaw," broke in Sir Richard. "She's got arms as sinewy as a blacksmith's."

"Well, Uncle, I ought to have; I had gymnastic training enough at school."

"She rows, and punts, and swims, and plays tennis



—and thinks she can play cricket—but she can't," added her uncle with a good-humoured laugh.

"I don't profess to—only with you. It's not a ladies' game."

This two-mile drive, over one of the best roads, in one of the most charming valleys in the world, with its dark-green, neatly-trimmed private hedges, its wavy grass meadows, spotted with blue and white and yellow flowers, its vistas of quaint old manors and modern, ornate villas, its glimpses of the placid Thames with its perpetual green banks, with reeds and brook-willows gracefully nodding to the summer breeze; all this was like a vision of paradise to the young sailor who had been confined to a "cruiser" for two years. Sidney sniffed the fragrant air with a long-drawn breath, and exclaimed: "How sweet and fresh the air is this evening!"

"Yes," answered Elsie; "there was a shower this morning, then the sun came out with great force, which, I notice, always makes the air deliciously fragrant."

"Ha!" exclaimed Sidney, with the fervour of gratification, "there is nothing in the world like it, after all."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, my boy; you like your own country best, with all its fogs and other faults."

"Yes, decidedly. I wish I could always remain in it."

"Why can't you?" asked Elsie, turning her warm brown eyes upon him.

The young fellow hesitated, so her uncle answered: "Because he's subject to the whims of the Admiralty, my dear."

They now turned off the river road, and up a com-



paratively short avenue of fine old chestnuts, elms and copper-beeches. Oxley House, Sir Richard's country seat, was by no means a large place. It was of the Elizabethan style of architecture, built by a rich Anglo-Indian nabob in the early part of the last century; the sixteen rooms were large and lofty, with dark oak panels, and beautifully frescoed. The estate comprised ten acres, studded, here and there, with fine old firs and cypress trees, rare shrubs, palms, and costly picturesque plants, and clumps of holly, trimmed into all sorts of odd cones, pyramids and domes; here and there were sturdy standard rose-bushes, with trunks as thick as a man's wrist, laden with the first buds and blooms of early summer.

The close-cut green velvet lawns sloped to the river, and on the bank was a modern boat-house, built in imitation of a Swiss chalet; while, near by, in marked contrast, was a miniature Roman temple of stone, partly covered with ivy and other creeping vines, which served as a summer-house.

It was an ideal little home, with such natural beauties as only patience, time and wealth can produce. As they drove up to the ivy-covered portal of the house, a groom took charge of Ginger, and a portly, middle-aged butler held the door open for them to enter. As Sidney was going up the staircase to be shown to his room, his host called cheerily to him:

"Don't dress for dinner, my boy! I never do, except when Lady Brattle has some of her literary set here. I detest all ceremony, you know, that detracts from my comfort."

This was characteristic of the little man. There was a genial *bonhomie*, an effervescent gaiety, a perpetual jesting spirit about "Dick Brattle" with his intimates



when away from business that made him universally liked.

When they sat down to dinner, Sidney noticed that Sir Richard had exchanged his black business coat for an old, easy-fitting, blue serge jacket. Elsie had put on a pale-blue muslin blouse; through its gauzy sleeves he saw the outlines of her shapely arms; the lace collar was low and rolling, revealing to advantage the perfect contour of her neck and throat. Her complexion, it seemed to Sidney, had softened, now that she was indoors, and her eyes looked deeper, rounder, and more fawn-like, perhaps in association with the pale-blue garment.

Elsie sat in her aunt's place, directing the meal with the gentle dignity, ease and grace, of an experienced matron.

"Now, then, Fraulein," said the host, smacking his lips, as they took their seats, "what have you provided?"

"Oh, nothing very elaborate, the usual five," replied Elsie. "Why, are you hungry?"

"Yes, I am. I believe Sidney has brought back my youth, and, with it, a youthful appetite."

"Ah, Uncle, your youth doesn't need much bringing back, it's almost perpetual. When you are eighty, I believe you'll still want to play leap-frog and cricket."

"I hope so, my dear, I hope so. Sidney, claret or burgundy?"

"Claret, Sir Richard, please."

"Mottle," to the butler, "fill Mr. Dane's glass. I prefer burgundy myself. It puts me in that cosy, comfortable, soporific condition, which leads to half an hour's oblivion after dinner. When I recover, I'm as fresh as a lark until midnight."



What a delightful dinner it was to the young fellow, who mentally compared it with that which he was accustomed to in the cramped, stuffy mess-room of the *Psyche*. The casements were open, and a light, balmy breeze drifted into the room, laden with the delicious fragrance of blooming roses.

Sidney was thoughtful and silent, for his eyes and mind were constantly recurring to the radiant girl near him, so much so indeed, that between every course Sir Richard started a new subject of conversation, for he noticed the formal constraint between them, and did his best to dispel it.

"Well, Fraulein, what did Tom Pleet have to say? I saw him talking to you."

"Oh, he wished me to join him at tennis after dinner. Flossie and her *fiance* want to play us; but I told him it was out of the question."

"Oh, you could take Sidney over—the Pleets are neighbours of ours—he explained to Sidney. It would amuse you to see them playing together, for Tom's knock-kneed and Elsie's left handed."

"Now, Uncle Dick, I wish you wouldn't be quite so personal. It's cruel of you. I'm sure, Tom can't help it——"

"Nor you, my dear. Do you play, Sidney?"

"Very badly. I've never had much practice, you know."

"Then don't play with Elsie, for she's a demon with that left arm of hers."

"If Miss Lisle will tolerate me, I should like to be her victim."

"Ah, I daresay you're only depreciating your ability, for my future discomfiture," she said, smilingly.



"Oh, no, I assure you, I was always too studious to acquire any ability at the game."

After dinner the young people left Sir Richard to his cigar, and Elsie led the way to the tennis-court. The girl won three sets to *nil*, before the fading twilight gave place to the silvery rays of the moon, and Sidney was thinking what a duffer she must consider him for having said that he could play at all.

Just as they were finishing the last set, Tom Pleet, a flabby, pale-faced, long, dark-haired young man of twenty-five, joined them. Elsie introduced the young men, and they all three strolled down to the river bank, and there sat chatting in the moonlight (Pleet often wishing Sidney in Timbuctoo), until Sir Richard joined them. Then they went back to the house and played whist until close upon midnight.

When Elsie had retired for the night, and the two men were alone, smoking a last cigar, Sidney asked :

"Who is Tom Pleet, Sir Richard?"

"His father's the head of the great limited brewery, 'Pleet, Birkins and Co.' Tom's a literary genius."

"By Jove! I thought so, by his style," cried Sidney. "His long, oily hair, his low, rolling shirt-collar, his round, dreamy, ogling eyes, and his fondness for metaphorical phrases would mark him out for a poet."

"Yes, he's a popular poet."

"Popular? I never heard of him."

"Popular with his relations," said the old gentlemen drily.

"Ha! How so?"

"Well, every year, he publishes by subscription, chiefly his mother's and his own, a volume of verse and margin—well, it's principally margin."



“Ha, ha! I see what you mean. He’s a poet at his own expense.”

“And at the expense of those who read him. He’s a modest young fellow; he classes himself only with Keats.”

“He is very confidential with Els—with your niece.” The young fellow checked himself, as he was about to say Elsie; but the break did not escape his alert host.

“Yes,” the Q. C. replied, “poets, parsons, and policemen, I notice, are natural magnets for the various grades of feminine intellect.”

Sidney smiled at the sarcasm, and when they finished their cigars, they went reluctantly to rest.

That night, as Sidney lay in bed, musing over the agreeable events of the day, his mind dwelt on Tom Pleet with positive aversion.

“But, why should I dislike him?” he asked himself. “He treated me well enough, though with an air of superiority. How familiar he was with Elsie—how he held her hand when he said good-night. I wonder if he has a right to?” Then he gradually drifted into a happy dream, wherein a fair girl, in a blue, gauzy blouse, with tender, light-brown eyes, a finely chiselled Grecian nose, and a delicate patrician point to it, was the central figure.



## CHAPTER II.

## WE MEET NELLY SHY, OF CHICAGO.

ON Monday morning, at breakfast, Sir Richard and Elsie both got letters from Lady Brattle, saying she would return home that day, and bring with her an American lady of distinction, whom she had met whilst visiting Lady August.

Sir Richard and Sidney went to town together, as the young man had some business matters to attend to; and the Q. C. had to finish his closing speech for the plaintiff, in the divorce case of Ganty *versus* Ganty and Schonerstein."

"How long will your business detain you, Sidney?" asked Sir Richard, when seated in the train.

"I can't say exactly. In fact, I was about to ask your advice on the matter, Sir Richard," said the young fellow, with some hesitation.

"It is at your service, my boy. Proceed."

"Well," began Sidney, "Tuttle, our chief gunner and I have invented an electrical appliance for marine guns, that we believe will be invaluable to the Navy. If we patent it while in the service, the Admiralty will claim it, and remunerate us according to their own more or less liberal views."

"I see. I see. Whose idea is it?"

"Originally mine, but Tuttle, being a practical man, helped me to develop it. We have now perfected the



invention, and Tuttle intends to resign from the service and take out the patent."

"In his name, or jointly?"

"If jointly, the Government may still claim my interest, you see."

"Of course. Of course. Well?"

"So I—I—wished to ask you, sir, if you will act as—as a sort of trustee, for my half of the invention."

"That is, allow you to assign your share to me."

"Without liability. For we have ample funds to patent it, and Tuttle will attend to the business afterwards."

"Certainly, my lad. I'm glad to be able to assist and encourage you."

"Oh, thank you, Sir Richard. I hesitated to ask you, because I know you are a very busy man; but I know of no one else I could trust."

"Will this invention be of much value?"

"If the Admiralty accept it, it will make us both very rich men."

"I'm pleased to find you so ambitious, Sidney. I'll do all I can to help you."

The young fellow again thanked him, and went about his business that day with a light heart.

In the evening, when Sir Richard and his protégé returned from the city, they found that Lady Brattle and her American guest had already arrived.

Sidney was kindly welcomed by Lady Brattle, then he and Sir Richard were introduced to the famous Nelly Shy, of Chicago.

"Glad to know you, Sir Richard," said Miss Shy, briskly, "and you, Mr. Dane," shaking them both cordially by the hand. "Great speech of yours, Sir Richard, in the Ganty divorce case—read it in the



*Globe* coming out—how you did go for that Jezebel, Schonerstein—eh?”

“Miss Shy,” broke in Lady Brattle, “my husband dislikes to mention his law cases at home.”

“Oh! Too modest, I suppose. Wal, I find all smart men are modest.”

“It’s not exactly modesty, Miss Shy,” said Sir Richard, smiling, “but from the same feeling that a hospital surgeon does not care to discuss the hideous operations of the dissecting-room in his family circle.”

“I git on to the idea, the divorce court is your dissecting-room. I hope you’ll excuse my Chicago density.”

“Oh, don’t say that,” replied the Q. C. courteously, “for I understand Chicago leads the world in alertness and commercial enterprise.”

“We come pretty nigh feeding it, at any rate,” replied Miss Shy, as she accepted Sir Richard’s arm to the dining-room.

Elsie regarded Nelly Shy with some curiosity, for she was a tall, lithe, vivacious woman of perhaps thirty; her large bright eyes were black and glossy as jet, while her dull raven hair had a rebellious tendency to kinking and curling in an ungovernable, fluffy mass. She had a light, warm creole complexion, almost of a copper hue, when excitement brought the hot Southern blood to her cheeks; for her mother was a Quadroon, and her father (Colonel Shy, of New Orleans), sacrificed his life in the Confederate cause. There was, in Nelly’s manner, a self-reliant, off-hand assurance, which at first blush seemed to many unwomanly; but her jocular, fraternising habit of ignoring chilling rebuffs and social distinctions, her quaint accent and odd mingling of trenchant, picturesque English with Western idioms, in her shrewd observations, amused her listeners; while



her imperturbable good nature ultimately compelled them to regard her with favour, and accept her for what she was—a pushing, energetic American lady journalist.

“Miss Shy is going round the world,” observed Lady Brattle to her husband, at the end of the first course.

“Ah, indeed. For pleasure, Miss Shy?”

“No. For ‘*The Ladies Journal*,’ of Chicago.”

“She is writing a series of illustrated articles, on ‘Women of the World,’ Richard.” Lady Brattle always called her husband “Richard” in company, and “Dick” in private.

“Oh! You must have found many unique and spicy varieties in London.”

“Yes. I’ve seen some fast trotters, in single and double harness there. But it’s the domesticated, home-loving variety I’m after.”

“Isn’t it curious, Richard, that Miss Shy should be engaged writing of one class, and I making a book on the other?”

“It is an odd coincidence. I should imagine you to be of much assistance to each other.”

“We have already discovered that,” said the American. “From what I had read and heard of the doings and sayings of English society women, before leaving the West, I came to the conclusion they must be chiefly the progeny of broken-down turf sports, united to ex-music-hall artists. But, thanks to Lady August and Lady Brattle, I have been introduced to English homes, where the golden flower of womanhood blooms in all its purity, and where the nauseous, flaunting, flimsy, weak-stemmed poppy of turfy, music-hall society is unknown, or justly ignored.”

“And I,” observed her hostess, “have learned that



the middle-class, well-bred American women are thoroughly proficient in housekeeping, and vie with each other in inventing delicacies for the table, beautifying their homes, and encouraging the social and domestic virtues. And their girls, while given a greater liberty than ours, are not all the capricious, title-worshipping dolls, or tyrannical wives, the superficial novelist would lead us to believe."

"Quite a mutual and satisfactory discovery," said the host. "What did *you* think of the American girls, Sidney?"

"We only touched at Frisco. I had little opportunity of judging."

"I guess you're not a ladies'-man," observed Miss Shy, flashing her dark eyes upon the young lieutenant.

"Well, no, I don't think I am," replied the young fellow, flushing.

"I hope you're not," said Lady Brattle severely, "for the so-called 'ladies'-man' is no judge of woman. He is too selfish; he can see only the frivolous side of her nature, and cares nothing for the true nobility of womanhood."

"Then, I certainly am not," rejoined Sidney. "For if there is one characteristic I admire in a woman, it is sedate, domestic contentment."

Lady Brattle was gratified at this expression, for she was one of those rigidly virtuous women who mistrust the morals of all men. She was a handsome, portly woman of fifty, with a light, warm complexion, and beautiful silvery blonde hair, which, in younger days, had been a delicate amber. Her eyes were blue and penetrating; and there was in her manner a stately expression of power and authority, which caused the young lieutenant to respect her, though he never felt the



same feeling of attachment for her that he did for her husband, Sir Richard.

It may be as well to acquaint the reader at once with Lady Brattle's early history. She was the fifth and oldest daughter of Sir Rodric Bevis, who for many years held a high government position in India. There "Betsy" Bevis was brought up, and, at the desperate age of thirty, while in a fit of pique at a recreant lover, accepted, and married in hot haste, Commander Victor Le Zaras, of the French Navy, a man about ten years her senior. Some five years after the birth of their only child, M. Le Zaras resigned his position under the Tri-colour, took service with a Burmese prince, and became the Commodore of the prince's naval flotilla. Leaving his wife in India with her sister (Mrs. Colonel Lisle), the newly-made Commodore rapidly grew rich under the lax Burmese administration. He visited his family from time to time, during the first few years of his new career, but refused to take them abroad with him, because, as he said, his station in Burmah was a most unhealthy one. Ultimately, the licentious scamp, for this he was, threw off the mask, and wrote to his wife that he had adopted the Burmese religion and set up an establishment in accordance with the custom of the country. He, however, offered to provide a separate home for his wife and her child, if they would come to him. This his spirited wife scornfully refused, and at once applied for a divorce. Finally, the cruelly-treated lady returned to her father in England, and after some difficulty a divorce was obtained.

Richard Brattle, Q. C., her present husband, had been her leading counsel, and seeing much of the still handsome woman, he became fascinated by her, so that, soon after the decree had been made abso-



lute, "Dick Brattle," as his intimates called him, succumbed to the charms of his fair client, and Madame Le Zaras became Mrs. Brattle. A year or two later, through the prestige of his wife's friends, among whom were some influential political relations, and his own great ability, he was made a baronet.

As a bachelor, Dick Brattle had spent a life of restless gaiety. Without being heartless or cruel, he had become satiated with the attentions of, and his own gallantry towards, ladies of easy virtue, so that, now that he had found his ideal of a woman, he was quite ready for a life of connubial repose—as frequently happens to gay bachelors. Their ten years of married life had been all that could be desired; for there was a deep and genuine attachment between them. Lady Brattle's frequent outbursts of irritability were dissolved like vapour in the sun of her husband's genial good-humour. Her very proneness to fits of ill-temper charmed the man who had encountered but few thorns in the rosy paths of love he had heretofore traversed.

It rained that night, so the guests were entertained indoors. But the next evening, after dinner, Lady Brattle and Miss Shy sat chatting together, watching the young people at tennis, for Tom Pleet and his sister had come over for their usual game, and were playing against Sidney and Elsie.

"I admire your niece immensely," said Miss Shy, impulsively to her hostess, as the game proceeded. "What a charming, dashing girl she is! How her eyes glow with the zest of the game. She hasn't been presented yet, I suppose?"

"No, I don't intend her to be," replied Lady Brattle.

"No! Why?"



"I think it all a mistake, in the present condition of society."

"I guess you're about right," was Miss Shy's characteristic rejoinder.

"She's perfectly contented as she is. We take her occasionally to the galleries, operas, concerts, theatres, and small social functions in the neighbourhood here, that is all."

"Has she no admirers—no attachment?"

"No, I'm glad to say."

"I fancied—wal, I guess, it was only a false notion I'd got."

"What was the notion? Pray don't hesitate to tell me, Miss Shy."

"Wal, I fancied that greasy-haired poet, from his manner when he greeted her this evening, acted something like a man with a straight flush in a game of poker."

"How do you mean?"

"Wal, he had a little too much confidence, as if he had a 'cinch on her.'"

"Oh, I assure you, there's nothing in it. I don't think she cares for him."

"How long have they known each other?"

"Since she returned from Switzerland. About a year ago."

"Wal, I wouldn't let them browse about too much alone—if *you* don't fancy him. For there's nothing so dangerous to an innocent girl as a sentimental ass; her sympathies are won before she knows it—before she's learned to use her reasoning faculties."

"Ha, ha! There is some truth in that, but I have no fear in Elsie's case."

"We can never tell, my dear Lady Brattle. Now,



when I was a girl, I detested sailors, but I married one——”

“Dear me!” exclaimed Lady Brattle, “are you a widow, Miss Shy?”

“I am. Twice a widow. Once divorced by the laws of Illinois, and then by the death of my lamented scapegrace, Charley. Poor old Charley!”

Lady Brattle thought of her own case, but only asked, “Were you twice married, Miss Shy?”

“Oh, no. Divorced for five years, then he died. I went into mourning because I really doted on him—and black was rather becoming to me,” was the complacent rejoinder.

“What was he?”

“A Mississippi pilot. He was a handsome man, but the most sentimental, plausible liar on the river. He quoted poetry with the convincing pathos of a parson, and yet gambled like a prince. Poetry was his hobby, and gambling and flirting were his vices. I was only twenty when I met him one moonlight night coming down from Memphis. I thought I had some backbone, but, before we got to New Orleans, he had so charmed me with his lofty, high-falutin sentiments, we were engaged—and married within a week.”

“Within a week!” exclaimed her ladyship, surprised. “Why did you divorce him?”

“Why! Because he’d no more constancy than a jack-rabbit. Every pretty girl he met created a new passion in him—which he generally quenched according to the notions of Solomon. I was a fool, I know; but I couldn’t stand it, then; I loved too ardently, too selfishly. It’s a great pity mother Eve didn’t endow us with some of her patient philosophy, for she must have



had a high old time of it with Adam browsing about Eden, sighing and seeking for the unattainable."

"Ah, that's good!" laughed Lady Brattle. "Yes, I think we might accept the vagaries of men with more fortitude than we do."

"The sooner we do the better. Instead of retaliating and aping their foibles, which are somewhat instinctive to them, and innately odious to us, we might as well submit with the grace of the Roman matrons, who had far more provocation than we have."

"I quite agree with you, Miss Shy."

The evening was calm, still and peaceful, and the air delicious with a humid fragrance; the two ladies, sitting in comfortable wicker chairs, paused in their conversation, and turned their attention for a moment to the young people, who had finished playing and were coming towards them.

Lady Brattle surveyed her dashing guest with a look of admiration and then presently asked:

"Have you never thought of marriage again, Miss Shy?"

"Thought of it? Why, I've worried over it! I've hankered after it like a president after a third term. Show me the widow with a heart that doesn't."

"You must have had offers," said the hostess, conveying a compliment in her tone and admiring glance.

"More'n you could shake a stick at. The great wonder to me is how I've shook them all. But from the time I took up journalism I made up my mind to go it alone, and have ever since heroically smothered sentiment—except with my own sex."

"I admire your strength of character," said the elder lady, with warm approval.



“Thank you ; but it’s sometimes been nip-and-tuck between reason and sentiment, I can tell you !”

Lady Brattle smiled at this blunt confession, and, as the others came up, they all strolled towards the river-bank ; there they sat and chatted in the Roman temple, and watched the belated boats drifting like phantoms in the hazy gloaming. As they walked towards the river, Sidney had just found time to utter a few words of admiration at Elsie’s playing, for they had defeated Tom and his sister Flossie.

“I believe you could have beaten them without me ?” he said.

“Oh, no, I won’t let you disparage your playing like that,” Elsie replied.

“I felt in that game like the craven Dahomeans, who let their women fight their battles for them.”

“Do they really compel them to fight ?” she asked, somewhat incredulously.

“The women compel the men to stay at home.”

“What queer creatures they must be. Did you see any of them ? Are they fine-looking ?”

“I suppose they are, when one gets used to them—I didn’t.”

“What sort of uniform do they wear ?” She asked this with all innocence, but it confused Sidney.

“Oh, it’s—it’s an airy costume, not very expensive—a—a ! Well, something like the Scots’ Guards—but not so—so elaborate.”

“Oh, it’s a warm country, isn’t it, so they have to dress accordingly ?”

Sidney assented, and was glad to drop the subject there, for, though a sailor, he was innately refined, and shrank from bringing a blush to an innocent cheek by relating what he had seen and heard of the women of



Dahomey. Dane naturally was modest, gentlemaned and reserved; he was, moreover, so free from self-assertion that people often mistook his modesty for dull reticence.

This very characteristic now prevented him from expressing, in adequate complimentary phrases, his admiration for the bewitching girl by his side. He feared to seem unduly intrusive or presumptuous, he did not know which, in his frame of mind, for that brief hour of playing with her had somewhat bewildered him. For the sway and grace of her moving form, the swirl of light drapery about her plump, round limbs, with now and then a peep of her perfectly arched instep and dainty ankle—as she stood poised a moment to intercept a desperate shot—the rich mantling colour in her cheeks, as her breath came faster and faster, and her beautifully formed nostrils quivering, her breast heaving, and her eyes glowing and flashing with her zest in the game; all this charmed Sidney more and more, and intensified his sweet delirium. Then he sadly recalled Tom Pleet's confidential manner towards her again that evening, something in it a little more tender, a little more affectionate than a friendly greeting, which she accepted complacently; and he dreaded that he was nursing a vain desire.

Then hope sprang up again, as he remembered how her eyes had once or twice encountered his, with a maidenly, surprised look, and then were timidly cast down for an instant, as if she read in his gaze his unmaskable admiration.

Sir Richard had now joined the group in the summer-house, and Sidney had been conversing some time with Flossie Pleet, a frail, insipid brunette, when he sud-



denly discovered that Elsie and the poet had rambled off along the river by themselves.

This set him to speculating once more on their relations. Nelly Shy seemed to make the discovery about the same time, for, glancing at Sidney, she gaily cried :

"I wonder if there's a British tar anywhere about who wouldn't object to taking a restless female in tow, for I'm just dying for a walk."

"I'm at your service," answered Sidney, catching her spirit of frivolity.

"There, you see!" cried the American to Lady Brattle, "there's nothing like advertising your wants. Why! I've been hankering after a British tar all my life, and nothing but my Chicago modesty has deprived me of the distraction."

Lady Brattle made some appropriate rejoinder, and the pair strolled off together.

"You mustn't mind my nonsense, Mr. Dane," said Nelly, with a gentle pressure of his arm, which would have sent a thrill of rapture through many an older man. "I've taken a fancy to you. I like your open frank face. You're not foolishly impressionable—you are confessedly a woman-hater——"

"Oh, no, I'm not, Miss Shy. I can heartily return the compliment. I like you, and admire your western independence."

"Then, we'll shake on that," she said, grasping his hand. "Now," she continued, "don't think me inquisitive, but I've just a *leetle* curiosity to know how far that poetical ass, Pleet, has got into Elsie's affections."

"Do you think him an ass?" enquired her companion with surprise.

"The most insipid donkey since Balaam's. Why, the rubbish he's written!—Elsie showed me his volumes



yesterday—it's enough to create an Act of Congress for the suppression of poetry! Elsie thinks it's divine. It's twaddle!"

"Does she?" asked Sidney. "I should have thought better of her judgment."

"So should I; but every woman has a streak of weakness somewhere in her composition. I'm no exception."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the young fellow. "Your weakness is not very obvious, Miss Shy."

"Thank you, but I've got it just the same."

Elsie and Pleet were a hundred yards ahead of them, their figures just discernible in the faint rays of the moon.

"There they are," observed Nelly. "Now I never bet, but I'll give you a box of cigars if he isn't talking love. She hasn't taken his arm, you see, but his arm is cushioned affectionately at the back of hers. He is looking at her, her eyes are turned away, perhaps dreamily averted. How they amble along. He kicks a stone now and then reflectively."

Sidney assented with a forced laugh. But his companion little dreamed how intensely interested he was in all these symptoms, and how he strove to suppress the first feeling of jealousy that had ever possessed him. What were they talking about? he asked himself.

"I think him awfully dull," Tom Pleet was saying to Elsie. "I don't know why seamen should presume to call landsmen lubbers, for certainly there is no more lubberly fellow than a sailor ashore attempting tennis."

"Oh, I don't agree with that, Tom," said the girl. "I think Mr. Dane far from ungainly."

"You can't call him graceful or handsome, Elsie."



"Well, no; but he is—he is—well, manly."

"Say masterful—that's just his characteristic. All these young lieutenants emulate the dogmatism of their superiors."

"Oh, no, he does not, Tom, he is gentleness itself, I'm sure."

"Ha, ha! It's amusing what romantic fancies you girls get of sailors," he laughed, patronisingly.

"You mustn't say that of me, Tom; I've no romantic fancies about sailors, at any rate."

"Pardon me, Elsie, but I fear you have."

"Why, Tom! How can you say that?" asked the maiden with gentle asperity.

"Haven't you praised him, haven't you——"

"Only when you—you disparaged him, called him dull," she broke in warmly.

"Well, he *is* dull. In the vulgar parlance, he's a duffer."

"Let us turn back, Tom," said the girl firmly. "You're not in a kindly mood to-night."

"No, let us go on a little farther, Elsie," Tom pleaded with a tender pressure on her arm, for she had stopped. "I—I wish to—to tell you, Elsie, I can't bear to share your friendship with—with this fellow."

"No," she said coldly, "I prefer to return;" and she turned about.

At this juncture, Nelly and Sidney came within speaking distance, and the American called out: "Say! Elsie! would you mind exchanging gallants with me? This brazen sailor has quite abashed me with his flattery. If you could only see it now, my face is covered with blushes." She had told Sidney before they came up what she was about to do, so that he was quite prepared for this whimsical speech.



"Oh, come, Miss Shy," Sidney rejoined in the same bantering tone, "you shouldn't give me away like that. It isn't every day a fellow has the pleasure of talking to such a charming American."

"There you hear, Elsie!" she cried. "Mr. Pleet, I must beg the protection of your arm. I'm sure I shall be safe with you."

Thereupon, Nelly took Pleet's arm, and, as they walked on, continued in a confidential undertone:

"I had no idea of the audacity of the British tar! Why! would you believe it, he actually pressed my hand, said my gait was that of a princess, and my foot the daintiest he had ever seen. All within—ten minutes."

This absurd fiction increased the poet's jealousy, for Elsie and Sidney were now ambling on behind them.

"I never knew a sailor yet," said Pleet contemptuously, "with any sense of delicacy. They're all either cads or profligates."

"Oh, I don't know about cads, but they can generally keep up their end of a flirtation," replied Nelly.

The conversation between Elsie and her companion was far from being animated. The girl could not immediately forget Pleet's passionate outburst; for, though she had innocently drifted into a familiar, sisterly friendship with him, she had never dreamed of it leading to anything deeper. Now it stunned and annoyed her to make the discovery; so that she replied to Sidney's remarks in abstracted monosyllables, which discouraged him very much, for he naturally concluded he had been a party to interrupting a pair of lovers, and he despised himself accordingly. If he had known, how-



ever, how his voice moved her, how the love-flame in his dark blue eyes had thrilled her fresh young heart, haunting her dreams and causing her that night to toss about on her pillow with the same strange feverishness that Helen of Troy must have experienced when she first encountered Paris, he would have been happy.



## CHAPTER III.

## ELSIE ASTONISHES LADY BRATTLE.

AT breakfast next morning Elsie seemed to Sidney a shade paler. A new sensation had come into her life. She was still but a child in experience, for the solitude of her life with her Swiss preceptress, with its rural pleasures and simple pursuits, had kept her much younger in many things than girls reared in the society world can ever be.

"I approve of higher education for women, but not for girls," said Lady Brattle to Miss Shy, as they sat on the south verandah, enjoying the balmy morning air. "Higher education produces the fast, fickle, frail creatures that crowd fashionable circles; idle, audacious, slangy girls, who are no more fit for wives than a grisette is. They are rapidly driving the notion of marriage out of the heads of all shrewd, thinking men who meet them. And yet they wonder why men do not marry nowadays! They're not such fools as to accept the crumpled, vitally exhausted poppies of society while the pure lilies of the field are still to be gathered."

"But the lilies are getting scarcer every year," observed her guest.

"For that very reason, they should be cultivated. I believe there is already a marked reaction in good society, and that up-to-date creatures will be utterly excluded in another decade."



"I hope so, for our sex's good," said Miss Shy. Then after a pause, she continued, "Don't you think Miss Elsie looks paler this morning, Lady Brattle?"

"Now you mention it, I think she does, but I had not particularly marked it before you spoke. She over-exerted herself in that game last night."

"I hardly think it was the game," remarked Miss Shy, carelessly.

"That, and her walk together; perhaps both."

"More likely the *walk*—she walked *too* long," rejoined the American, drily.

"Walked too long? Really, I don't understand you."

"You remember what I said last night about young Pleet?"

"Yes, yes, I do."

"Well, no doubt, it's pretty bad taste to speak of what one sees when visiting, but I'm mor'n ever convinced the poet is posing as a lover."

"Dear me! What have you heard?"

"Heard nothing. But love's pantomime, you will admit, is sometimes more convincing than a play of words. She also got a letter this morning—which *you* did not see."

"You alarm me! I can hardly credit it! Why she is only eighteen."

"Just the favourite age, with a poet."

"Now, I remember, she did seem abstracted last night, and this morning, too."

"Of course, she did. Now, I hope, Lady Brattle, you won't think me ill-bred and meddlesome; for, if you hadn't seemed so averse to Pleet, and so dead sure last night, I should never have mentioned the subject again."



“Oh, I assure you, Miss Shy, I am deeply grateful to you.”

Nevertheless, she felt annoyed with herself, and experienced a vague resentment towards her guest. Presently, however, when Sidney came up, and Nelly went off with him for a walk, Lady Brattle was glad of the opportune chance of speaking with Elsie alone.

She found the girl in her boudoir, and was convinced, from a rapid scrutiny of her features, that something alarming had happened.

“My dear,” said Lady Brattle, taking her hand, and seating herself beside her on the couch, “you are not quite well! You have something to tell me, something that is distressing you. Pray, be quite frank, my dear!”

The girl hesitated a moment, her bosom heaved, her lips quivered, and her eyes grew moist with the effort to suppress the emotion that was struggling for relief. She then threw her arms around the other’s neck, and burst forth with,

“Oh, mother, mother! I—I——”

“Hush! child, hush!” cried Lady Brattle, unconsciously glancing at the door with a look of consternation. But Elsie had thrown her head upon her bosom, and sobbed forth.

“Oh, mother, mother! do not deny me now—I am in great distress—I need your counsel—I need your love. You *are* my mother, I’ve known it a long time. And, oh! how I have craved for the privilege of calling you by that sweet name, and of nestling to your heart.”

“But, how did you learn, child, how did you learn?” hugging her daughter to her breast with intense maternal fervour.



"From papa. Oh, mother, I have kept a secret from you. It was wrong, I know. I learned it from papa."

"From Commodore Le Zaras?" frigidly.

"Yes, yes. Oh, do not speak of him so coldly. He is my father, after all."

"But, how could you?" cried Lady Brattle, now pale and trembling with a new alarm. "How could he have told you?"

"He came to me in Switzerland, two years ago. He employed a private detective, and traced me through your letters sent to me at school."

"Oh, dear, dear! I might have foreseen this!" cried the mother, with deep anguish and regret. "But how did he gain access to you?"

"He frequently saw me out walking with our governess. So, one day, by the lakeside, he asked her if I was not from India, the daughter of Colonel Lisle. Of course, she said that I was; and he then told her he was a friend of the family, and had known Colonel Lisle very well. He met us day after day. Finally, one afternoon, when we were alone for a moment, he told me who he was, and asked me if I could not remember him; and I did, for, you know, I was five years old when he went away to Burmah, and I was led by my Hindoo nurses to believe that he was dead, and that my mother was dead—and that was why aunt and uncle had adopted me. But I had a vague, childish idea that you were not dead, but that something had happened which as a child, I was not to be told."

"Something did happen, Elsie, and your father is dead—dead to me, and to all Christians."

"Oh, mother, do not speak of him so bitterly. He spoke kindly of you, and said that, for the love of



power, he had abandoned his religion and neglected you. He told me that I must always honour and obey you, for you were a good mother, and to him, he added, a good wife."

"Did he tell you of my divorce?"

"Yes, everything. And he never blamed you once, but said that he was glad to learn that you were happy, for you deserved to be."

The distressed mother could not reply; her late husband's generous words stifled the rancour that was welling up within her. She rose and paced the room, her beautiful features strangely drawn with the effort to conceal both confusion and trepidation. At length she paused, and in a broken, tremulous, almost quaking voice, asked:

"Have you ever mentioned this to Sir Richard?"

"No, mother, for——"

"Then, don't, my child. For I have deceived him. In a vain, foolish moment, I told him I was childless—and I have never had the courage to reveal the truth, for he believes you to be the daughter of Colonel Lisle."

The mother clasped the girl's hands tenderly between her own, and continued: "My dear, you will keep this secret, for your mother's sake, I know. Men are so queer—so jealous! Sir Richard would not regard you with the favour he does if he knew whose child you are; he would not be human, if he did. So, my dear, I must beseech you, for the sake of our mutual happiness, to keep our secret."

"I will, mother, I will!" cried the girl, fervently, pressing her cheek against her mother's, and repeatedly kissing her. "But what must I do about this letter from my father. He is in London."



"In London, child! In London!" gasped Lady Brattle, her consternation returning tenfold.

"Yes. I—I—opened the letter this morning before you came to breakfast. It astonished, shocked me, so, I don't know how I concealed my distress. You may read it."

She gave the letter to her mother, who, with ill-concealed agitation, mastered the contents.

It began with many words of affection and endearment, and said that, as the writer had been in Paris on business, he could not resist coming to London on the chance of again meeting his dear child, who must be now almost a woman. It concluded by saying: "I am, now, my dear, in a position to make some financial provision for your future, and wish to do so. Therefore, if Lady Brattle will not permit you to meet me at the office of my solicitor, Mr. Ogilvie Thomas, 190 Walbrook Street, will she receive Mr. Thomas to-morrow so that he may explain my intentions? A telegram in care of Mr. Thomas will reach me. With great affection, your devoted father.

"VICTOR LE ZARAS."

When she had finished, the letter dropped from her hands as she exclaimed:

"Oh, you cannot meet him! It would be madness! Oh, gracious Heaven! What have I done that my path should be crossed with this man after all these years!"

Lady Brattle paced the room, panic-stricken with fear and distress, and utterly unnerved.

"Oh, what is to be done! What is to be done! Oh, that I had never been so weak and foolish as to deceive your uncle. Then, he could advise me."

"But, mamma, my father has a right to see me——"

"He has forfeited all right by years of neglect—by



a life of selfish, sensual indifference!" replied Lady Brattle fiercely.

"Oh, mamma!" The girl's eyes assumed an expression of sad, appealing gentleness. Her mother checked the outburst, and then, absently reading over the letter again, decided, after a little reflection, to let Elsie telegraph to Mr. Thomas. So, accordingly, an appointment was made with the solicitor for three o'clock that afternoon.

When Lady Brattle had somewhat recovered from the excitement, she said to Elsie:

"I thought, my dear, your distress was owing to another cause——" She paused and waited to see if the girl would explain.

"Do you mean Tom's conduct last night, mamma? Yes, that distressed me too, for——"

"Yes, yes, dear, did he propose to you!"

"I suppose it was a declaration; but it came upon me so suddenly that it shocked me."

"Then, you don't love him, dear?"

"Love him! No, that is why I felt so distressed at his manner, for I've never encouraged him. I fear I was very curt, and silent, and disagreeable with Sidney when he walked home with me."

"Oh, don't trouble about Sidney, my dear; he never noticed it."

Lady Brattle dismissed Sidney as of no consequence, and went on to say: "I am delighted, my dear, to find you have given me your confidence in your first affair of this kind, and I hope you will always do so in future."

"That, I should naturally do, mamma."

"I believe you would, my dear."

But the girl did not then confess her tender regard for Sidney Dane, because, with true maidenly modesty,



she was in doubt as to his affection. After the chilling remark of her mother, that he had not noticed her petulant humour, this smothered her confession.

What a blessing it is that the Almighty has made budding love so charmingly perplexing and uncertain ! It is the one human emotion that science cannot correctly analyse, or the mummary of smart society entirely eradicate, or make commonplace. The impatient old *roué*' and the most insatiate coquette are never entirely dead to its thrill. Though they cannot feel with the same ecstasy as of yore, they find no greater delight than in watching its mercurial effect on a younger generation.



## CHAPTER IV.

## AN UNEXPECTED SOLICITOR.

IN the afternoon, Nelly, perceiving that her hostess was suffering from a nervous uneasiness, invited Sidney to join her in a ramble along the river. About three o'clock in the afternoon, just as Lady Brattle was endeavouring to calm her nerves by a little repose, a closed carriage drove up to the entrance; a tall, corpulent, dark-bearded gentleman got out, and was shown into the cool, shaded drawing-room. The maid tripped up the stairs with the card of "Mr. Ogilvie Thomas," and on the landing encountered Elsie. The girl took the card to her mother, who said:

"You had better receive Mr. Thomas, Elsie, and say I shall be down in a few minutes."

Elsie descended the stairs, glided into the drawing-room, and, instead of meeting the solicitor, was met with the outstretched arms of her father, Victor Le Zaras.

The girl's face blanched when she saw who it was, and she stopped, undecided what to do. But her father came forward and cried:

"Ah, *mon enfant*, am I not welcome?" his large eyes and olive face beaming with animation.

"Yes, you are welcome—but—Oh, papa——" the girl's breast heaved, her tongue refused to utter the reproach she thought.



“ Ah, I zee, you resent ze subterfuge I have practice. Ah, *ma chérie*, forgive me—it was the yearning of a father’s heart! I knew your mo—your aunt would not let you come to zee me—zo, I come to you. It ees not what you like, eh?” He had taken her in his arms by this time, and kissed her with all the intense fervour of his paternal, animal nature.

“ I wished to see you,” she said, “ and should have come to you, sooner than you should have come to—to this house. Oh, dear! dear! why——”

“ I know, I know what you mean, *mon enfant*. But I will not compromise your mot—piff! I must say your aunt. But I firs’ fin’ your uncle ees pleading in ze court—zo there ees no danger.”

“ But, there is danger—we have visitors.”

“ I will only zee you—I will not trouble Lady Brattle. Zo make yourself peaceful. Ah,” he continued looking at her admiringly, “ you have ripened like a peach, round, full, and as sweet. You are now a woman, *ma chère*! A beautiful woman! More beautiful than your mother—and she was an angel, too good for me. Ah, yes, too good for me! Is she well, and happy?”

“ Yes, but your letter has almost prostrated her—for she thought you were in Burmah. It shocked her that you should be so near. She did not know until to-day that you had seen me in Switzerland.”

“ Ah, I zee! You have told her you know she ees your—ees not your aunt?”

“ Yes. But only to-day—all this, you see, coming together, has distressed her.”

“ Yes, yes. I can think it would. And you, too, *ma chère*. But I have gain wealth in Burmah, and as I am grow old, I wish to make you a—a provision. For



you will some day marry—so I have deposited with Messrs. Coutts, ze bankers, ten zousand pounds—that shall be your dowry——”

“Oh, papa!” cried his child, her heart swelling with gratitude. “I cannot find words to thank you, you are so devoted to me.”

“You have found looks, *mon enfant*, zat speak your gratitude. Ah! I am proud of you—and grateful to the Almighty, that I should live to zee *ma chérie* grow to such a lovely woman.” They were seated together in the cool, shaded room, for only one of the blinds had been raised. He was caressing her hand with something of the fervour of a wild beast, when the door opened, and Lady Brattle glided into the room. She closed the door, leisurely placed her glasses over her patrician nose, and advanced towards them. They both rose to meet her, when she suddenly stopped, her glasses dropped from her hand, she grasped the back of a chair to steady herself, and managed to gasp:

“Elsie, is—this is *not* Mr. Thomas?”

The girl’s face became strangely marked with pain as she replied:

“No, mamma, it is—it is my father.”

With an effort her mother straightened herself, yet it seemed an eternity before either of them recovered sufficiently to speak; then her ladyship said:

“How dare you intrude here, sir? This is an outrage I did not expect even from you,” with imperious indignation.

Her former husband replied with his usual *bonhomie*, and easy indifference:

“I did not come to zee you, ma—Lady Brattle,” with emphasis on the title, “but to see our child!”

“You have forfeited all right to see your child——”



"Ah, pardon, *ma ladie*. No, no. I cannot admit that," with a deprecatory smile.

"You have, you have! By years of neglect, and——"

"By your divorce, you would say? Sez it not zo? The law always allows the father to zee ze child."

"I will not discuss the matter with you. I am now the wife of another—and it is a gross insult for you to come into his house in this base manner."

"But you would not let me zee *ma chère*."

"No, because, by your selfish, unchristian life, you are not fit to advise her."

"Ah, Betsy——"

"How dare you, sir, address me by——"

"You know me of old," he went on, ignoring her protest. "You may get angry, but I never did. I have deserved all you say,—but—I—adore our child. I come to provide for her, not to distress you."

"I will not allow you to provide for her!"

"Ah, but I have."

"You must not, you *shall* not!" exclaimed her ladyship, as she paced the room, her face deadly pale and distorted with suppressed anger. "She shall never be indebted to you for anything."

"Mamma!" pleaded the girl, "is that not—not unreasonable?"

"No; you cannot understand my reasons. He abandoned you, he——"

"Zo did you, *ma ladie*," retorted Le Zaras, with an amiable smile. "Until you had feathered your nest and chosen a new mate, then——"

"I will not endure this. Leave my house at once, sir," cried his former wife, now livid with rage, and indicating the door with an imperious wave of her hand.



"Auntie, auntie!" pleaded the girl, grasping her mother's arm, "do not say that."

"You had better listen to me, *ma ladie*. If we cannot be friends, we need not be enemies. We may meet again, for I am now the naval adviser to——"

"I don't care what you are—I pray to God we may never meet again," she broke in fiercely. "If you are not gone in ten minutes I shall summon the butler to show you the door." With this threat her ladyship left the room.

And presently, after an affectionate farewell with his daughter, Le Zaras drove away.

It would have saved her future trouble if Lady Brattle had listened to her former spouse, for he was about to explain that he was now the naval adviser to the Khedive of Egypt.



## CHAPTER V.

## NELLY INTERVIEWS SIDNEY.

MEANWHILE, Nelly Shy was entertaining Sidney. As they strolled along the river side, the dashing Nelly observed :

“ I hear you’ve been to pretty nigh all the most interesting ports of the Southern seas. Now, as I’m goin’ round the globe to write up the ‘ Women of the World ’ for the *Journal*, you might give me the benefit of your impressions, for I can’t possibly take in all the leetle one-horse countries along the route.”

“ But I didn’t form any impressions, Miss Shy,” said the young lieutenant, somewhat surprised, for she had taken out her note-book in a business-like way.

“ Didn’t form any impressions! How could you help it? ”

“ I had no opportunity.”

“ No opportunity, and you a sailor! Oh, come, that’s too extremely filmy. Why, you were telling Miss Lisle last night about the girls of Dahomey.”

“ Oh, but I saw very little of them; we only put in there for a few days.”

“ Oh, that was long enough to form an impression. Pretty pushing, strong-minded women, ain’t they? ”

“ I should say they were, but I——”

“ Rule the roost, don’t they? ”

“ I believe so.”



"Do the national fighting, but despise the domestic spanking, eh ?

"So I gathered from what Dolby, our surgeon, told me."

"Oh, Dolby investigated them, did he ?"

"Yes, as a naturalist, he was interested."

"Of course, of course. All men are naturalists in such matters," she said with a humorous glance.

"Wal, let's have his experience, if you're too modest to relate your own."

"But, I assure you, Miss Shy, I had none."

"Wal, for the sake of brevity, as they say in law, we'll admit that. It's perpetual leap-year in Dahomey. I've heard the girls propose, don't they ?"

"I believe Dolby said so."

"They've more passion than devotion, more muscle than modesty ; careless about their constancy, and thrash the man who scorns their advances, eh ?"

"Really Miss Shy, I paid so little attention to what Dolby said, I don't remember details ; but I think you're about right."

"Oh, I wish I had Dolby here. How old is your friend Dolby ?"

"About forty."

"Ah, then, by this time, he's an accomplished feminine naturalist."

"I suppose he is," replied Sidney, greatly amused at her audacious observations.

As they sauntered along, Miss Shy kept plying him with questions about the characteristics of the women of the various countries he had visited.

At length, when they were seated on a fragment of ruined masonry, with the river splashing at their feet, the dripping meadow-bolts glistening in the sun, and



the reeds swaying gracefully in the gentle breeze, Nelly observed :

"I suppose you and Dolby took in China and Japan?"

"Yes. We put into Hong Kong and Yokohama."

"Ha! what did Dolby think of the soft, seductive Japanese girls?"

"I really don't remember."

"Don't remember! Wal, I'm surprised! Why, Japan's a veritable paradise for the naturalist."

"Is it?" asked the young sailor, with genuine curiosity.

"Why, of course it is. Haven't you read the entrancing Japanese letters by the peripatetic poet of the *Telegraph*?"

"No, I can't say I have."

"Wal, do, the first chance you get; they give you the most fascinating details of the almond-eyed beauties; even to the frills they wear on their night-robes."

"Ho!" and Sidney glanced at Nelly with a surprised smile. "Aren't they rather—er—startling for a newspaper?"

"Oh, no. You can put most anything you like in an English journal, but you must be careful what you put on the stage."

"Do you believe in that sort of journalism, Miss Shy?"

"As a true woman, I don't. As a female pencil-pusher, I do. I've got to earn my living—the public want novelty—so it's my business to find it for them. If I don't, others will." Then, glancing inquiringly at him, she continued, "But I guess you think me strangely brazen and unwomanly, yet——"

"Oh, no, no, I don't, Miss Shy," he hastened to reply, for he had remained silent.



“ Oh, I guess you do, but you’re too well-bred to say so. If you knew me better, you wouldn’t.”

“ I assure you, I don’t. I can’t help wondering, and admiring your daring, enterprise—going round the world alone.”

“ I wish you would look at my career in this light,” she said, carelessly throwing one leg over the other, holding her knee with her clasped hands, so that the superb proportions of her limbs were outlined beneath her light muslin gown, a few inches of her dainty hose just visible, and her tiny, well-shod feet in most coquettish *evidence*.

“ Suppose I were a female doctor,” she continued, “ I should have to face all the hideous operations of the dissecting-room, and the noxious horrors of domestic practice. Wal, it’s a trite saying that ‘A good physician can’t be a good moralist,’ and it’s just as true that a conscientious lady journalist can’t be a stickler for propriety—and succeed. So, I consider the lady journalist and the lady doctor are riding the same mule. We are both politely jeered at, as we canter round the circus of society ; but I get a *leetle* the most of the jeering.” Her dark creole eyes flashed angrily, and two ruddy, copper-coloured spots glowed in her cheeks as she concluded.

“ Oh, I don’t think you do, Miss Shy. Your independent spirit compels admiration in most men——”

“ Oh, it’s not the men ; they’re generous enough. It’s the shallow, simpering daisies of society, who have no brains or backbone of their own, and envy those who have.”

“ I believe you’re not far wrong, though I know very little about society myself.”

“ Wal, you’d never die of enlargement of the heart,



if you did. Now, about Dolby! Was he much ashore in Japan?"

"A week here and a week there."

"And you were with him?" interrogated the lady journalist, with an arch smile.

"Yes, more or less."

"How did the social charms of the Japanese women impress you?"

"Impress me? Not at all, not in the slightest degree," replied Sidney, with perfect composure.

Nelly looked at him incredulously for an instant, and then continued:

"Wal, you're about as cold and passionless as a mud-turtle. Why, you must have missed half the fun of the fair. Wal, how did they strike Dolby?"

"He was very much interested, I should judge, for he was engaged on his diary for weeks after we left."

"Oh! So he kept a diary of his impressions?"

"Yes."

"How I wish I had that diary! Why, I'd give all my back-hair for a transcript of Dolby's impressions."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Sidney, "I don't think he'd care for you to see them."

"No, I guess not," said Nelly, drily.

Sidney Dane had one of those rare and singular temperaments that few women, and fewer men of the world, can understand. He was not indifferent to feminine beauty, but there was only one being in the world, whose voice and presence stirred his blood with the fever which produces the divine passion. Nelly Shy could not comprehend him; she had used every feminine art to win a compliment, or force an expression of admiration, without avail.



As they were retracing their steps, Nelly suddenly observed :

“ Say, you’re the most undemonstrative fellow I ever met. You must have had a heap of adventures in your travels, but you never brag about them.”

“ Yes, I’ve had some adventures.”

“ In Japan ? Romantic, eh ? ”

“ No, no. I believe you have got Japan on the brain,” he answered playfully.

“ In India ? ”

“ No, but I had one in Burmah that was rather amusing.”

“ Oh, let’s hear it.”

“ It was up one of those rivers where there’s a great trade in rice. The *Psyche* was anchored not far above the mouth. The place had been infested with petty Siamese pirates, and the native prince, to protect his trade, had established a little fleet of gunboats and put them in charge of an ex-commander of the French navy, named Le Zaras. This Le Zaras very quickly ruined the nefarious business of the pirates. So they set their wits to work to find some way of getting rid of him ; for, unlike his predecessors, he had been faithful to the Burmese prince. Well, it turned out that this Le Zaras was something of a lady-killer in his way, and the pirate-in-chief used a fair Siamese demoiselle as a decoy, got Le Zaras on board her barge, and when they were floating peacefully down the river, the pirate and his gang put out from a tributary and took poor old Le Zaras a prisoner.

“ It happened that day that Dolby and I had a boat’s crew and were sailing up the river on a botanical excursion, when we came abreast of the pirate craft, with the barge in tow. It struck me as



being somewhat suspicious, so I hailed the party. They saluted, but continued on their way. As we had instructions to examine all suspicious craft, I boarded her."

"I should think," said Nelly, "the lady-killer had reason to thank you for saving his life."

"Oh, he had, and he did," replied Sidney. They were now strolling up the chestnut drive towards Oxley House, and Le Zaras's carriage was just leaving the door.

"He was most profuse in his thanks," continued Sidney, "and entertained me at his bungalow——"

At this juncture, Le Zaras rapidly drove by.

"Did you notice that man?" asked Sidney.

"Yes," said Nelly, "why?"

"Why, he's the very image of the person I've been speaking about."

"What, the Frenchman?"

"Yes, I never saw a more perfect likeness."

"But it can't be him."

"Of course not," said her companion; yet it is an odd coincidence. The resemblance was most real and striking."



## CHAPTER VI.

## SIR RICHARD SUCCUMBS TO NELLY'S FLATTERY.

LADY BRATTLE was indisposed the day after her interview with M. Le Zaras, but found time to assure Miss Shy that Elsie was utterly indifferent to Tom Pleet. This information the American lost no time in gleefully conveying to the young lieutenant, whose hopes rose in consequence. But there was something in the young girl's manner he could not understand.

A day or two after, Sidney went to town with Sir Richard; for the Q. C. had consulted an eminent retired naval officer as to the value of his invention, and this gentleman reported most favourably upon it; the patent was duly applied for in the name of Peter Tuttle (now retired from Her Majesty's service), and one-half the interest assigned to Sir Richard Brattle.

Two nights before her departure for Paris, where she was going to make a protracted study of the fair Parisians, Nelly Shy found her host smoking alone in his study.

"Sir Richard," she said, "I wish to ask you a favour."

"I shall be charmed, Miss Shy, to grant it, I'm sure, if a possibility."

"Wal, as you know, I must leave day after to-morrow, I'm sorry to say, for I've had a most delightful visit."



"And we regret to lose your company, I assure you, Miss Shy."

"It's real nice of you to say so. Now, you're a modest man, I know——"

"Pray, don't accuse me of such a useless characteristic."

"Wal, you are. Now, I've been trying to induce Lady Brattle to allow me to publish her portrait in the *Chicago Ladies' Journal*, in our series of 'Famous Wives of Famous Men.'"

"Oh!" exclaimed Sir Richard, elevating his eyebrows.

"We've already had Mrs. Gladstone, Mrs. Chamberlain, Madame Carnot, Lady August, and others."

"Oh, indeed, quite a distinguished company."

"Wal, I believe I could get Lady Brattle's consent if I got yours. She's famous in literature; you're famous at the bar."

"Well, really, Miss Shy, I don't know what to say."

"Say as Mr. Justice August said when I asked him. 'Certainly, my wife's a brilliant woman, intellectually and physically, and I'm gratified at the eminent position she holds in the world of literature.' Now," she continued, "Lady Brattle is quite as famous in letters, and is the handsomest woman of her age I've seen in England, and her portrait ought to adorn our pages."

"I'm sure, I've no objection," smiled the Q. C. ironically, "if Lady Brattle wants to join the gallery of modest matrons——"

"Oh, it's not her seeking, I assure you, Sir Richard. She'd never thought of it but for me. I understand her reluctance; she's such a sweet, sensitive, womanly woman, she'd never dream of it or sanction it, without your approval. That's what I like in your English



wives, they rely so implicitly on the nicer judgment of the husbands."

The Q. C. thought to himself, this is an uncommonly sensible woman, and wavered.

Every celebrity likes flattery, or he would never become a celebrity. It is the one sweet wine from the vintage of fame that is agreeable to every palate. There are eminent men who are never surfeited with repeated bumpers; while others only accept a mere thimbleful, with the same depreciating smile that a young lady takes her first glass of champagne; but, nevertheless, they all assimilate it with satisfaction.

Sir Richard was flattered, and, consequently, after a little further urging, assented to Nelly's proposal, and in due time Lady Brattle's portrait appeared among the 'Famous Wives of Famous Men' in the still more famed *Chicago Ladies' Journal*.



## CHAPTER VII.

## SIDNEY BECOMES A LOVER IN EARNEST.

ABOUT five o'clock in the evening of the day before the American's departure, Sir Richard, Elsie, and Sidney rowed some three miles up the river to call upon the old Earl of Mulvaney, who was very fond of discussing his family matters with the astute Q. C., whose opinions, though he greatly valued, he reluctantly remunerated; for the old earl was penurious to a degree, and, under the guise of friendship, often gained much legal advice, just as many people use their social relations with a doctor.

The young people were invited to dinner, and after that function (at which they were edified by the earl's racy Irish brogue), they were left to ramble by themselves. At nine o'clock Sir Richard had not completed his business; so he sent Elsie and Sidney home alone, and said he would return later in the earl's carriage. So the young lovers set forth on their voyage down-stream. It was a delightful evening in June, and it seemed to Sidney that he had never seen his companion so merry before, for she mimicked the earl's brogue and style in a most bewitching manner. She laughed unconstrainedly at every mild joke of his, and, being thus encouraged, Sidney took the cue from his companion, and gave a burlesque imitation of McMullan at gunnery drill, even to the brogue. Elsie had to hold



her handkerchief over her pretty lips to keep from screaming at his unexpected drollery. Then the pleasure of amusing her impelled him to describe with light facetious satire, O'Fallan and McMullan engaged in a 'paceable' debate on home-rule; for the former was a Nationalist and the latter a rabid Orangeman.

When he had ended his recital, the girl's eyes were glistening with the tears of laughter, and she gave a deep satisfied sigh, as one will when the heart has been overcharged with mirth. Then they both fell to silently musing and speculating on the unexpected characteristics they had discovered in each other, for they had never had the opportunity of being so companionable before.

Later, when they got fairly into the stream, Elsie said: "You must let me row now, for I know you had a hard pull up."

"Faith oi'll not," replied Sidney, still talking in the facetious brogue. "Is it insult me, you would, asking me to let a lady row for me?"

"But I should enjoy it. Give me an oar, please."

"Sorry an oar ye'll get wid me," with much decision.

"But I really like sculling."

"So do the Fijians—wid clubs."

"Ha, ha, ha! you are determined to make light of everything. Even of the moon. Look, how she floats yonder like a silver egg," he cried, and then began, in a doleful baritone, Captain Corcoran's song from "Pinafore," "Pal-e m-o-o-n, to thee, I s-i-n-g," the words, being comically jerked out between each stroke of the sculls. They were swiftly gliding down the stream, the rays of the egg-shaped moon tipped the rippling river with a wavy, tremulous light, and the dome of heaven was flecked with scurrying clouds.



"There!" he said gaily, as he finished the verse, "you didn't know I was a rival of Santley's."

"I didn't know you had such a—a—" she stopped and searched her brain for an adjective that was not too complimentary—"such a trained voice," she finally said.

"A thousand thanks, madam, for the compliment he cried, doffing his cap with burlesque ceremony and almost losing his oar in doing so.

"There!" she exclaimed, "you will lose your oar if you are not careful. Pray, do be serious!"

"Pray, do be *steer-ious*," he rejoined banteringly.' "Why, you're running us into the bank. Port your helm! Port your helm! Quick!"

"Which is port?"

"Which is port! The idea of a river-bred girl not knowing port from sherry."

"What nonsense! I know you mean port and star-board. Which is port, please?" pleadingly.

"It seems to be the bank just now, kindly pull the other cord, or into the mud we go."

"It's all your fault! If you didn't act so—so ridiculously, I could steer well enough. Now, if you give me one oar, and you take the other, we shall get on much better."

"Divil an oar ye'll get!" he reiterated, his dark eyes glowing with mirth.

"Why?"

"Oh, I've got a reason."

"What is the reason?"

"You might not think it a good one."

"Yes, I should, please tell me!"

"Well, I prefer a pretty girl's handsome face to her handsome back. I prefer to watch the rays of the



moon playing amongst her auburn tresses, and the charming perplexity of her soft brown eyes, while she is trying to steer. I prefer——”

“Oh, Mr. Dane!” cried Elsie, her face becoming serious and suffused with blushes in the same instant.

“*Mister* Dane! Why am I suddenly plunged from the familiar Sidney, to the formal mister?”

“Because, because—well!—it’s not proper to call you by your Christian name.”

“But you have done so all the evening.”

“Oh, no, no; you must be mistaken.”

“Pardon me, but you have, Elsie.”

“Have I?—then—then it was thoughtless.”

“Then let us continue thoughtless—it is much better than insincere formality! She marked the increasing tenderness in his voice and the admiring glow in his eyes.

“But you must not talk like that.”

“Like what?”

“What you said just now. I’m sure you would not, if you knew.”

“Knew what?” leisurely pulling in his oars and leaning forward upon them.

“What I know,” was the answer evading his burning glance.

“Tell me what you know, and then I can judge.” It flashed upon him what the American had said.

“Oh, no, I can’t do that, it’s a confidence,” she replied.

Nelly Shy had told her that morning he must have been crossed in love to be so utterly indifferent to their sex; so the girl was thinking of that.

“Now, you compel me to be serious,” he replied, with a tremour in his voice that could not be misunderstood.



He longed to take one of those plump round hands that lay in her lap and pour forth the volcano of love that was surging within him.

Her lustrous brown eyes no longer met his with absolute candour, her voice was lower, and she had lost her recent buoyant self-possession; but with this shy hesitation she looked to him sweeter than ever. Now that Love had thrown his magic influence about her soul, as reflected in the tenderness of her face, she seemed to the young sailor too angelic to woo, too pure and innocent to shock, with a declaration that he feared might be abhorrent to her. So he began to row again.

"Don't you think it has become cooler?" she asked, with a shudder, and an effort to speak calmly.

"Perhaps it has; do you feel cold?"

"Yes, a little," contracting her pretty shoulders.

"Then let me throw my coat over you." He quickly doffed his coat, as he spoke.

"Oh, no, I will not deprive you."

"But I don't need it. I'm exercising."

"Thank you, but I can't accept your coat. 'There is a rug in the bow of the boat; can you find it?'"

"Oh, yes." He drew in the sculls and reached for the wrap which proved to be a thick Scotch plaid.

"Is it quite dry?" she asked, as he was about to place it over her shoulders.

"I believe so," he said, feeling it.

She hesitated, and felt it too. "Aren't you really going to wear your coat?" she asked looking up into his face, her handsome Grecian nose in profile.

"No. I feel more freedom without it. I'm used to the weather, you know."

"Then, if you don't mind, Mr. Dane, I think I prefer the coat."



Sidney silently placed the coat over her shoulders.

"Oh, thank you." Then, after a pause, she continued, as if it were an after-thought. "I think it safer, don't you? The rug may be damp, and we can't feel it, and I might catch cold."

Sidney assented. If he had been in his usual cool, placid frame of mind, he would have seen through the girl's absurd preference for his jacket, for the rug was perfectly dry; it was only a love-sick feeling, a sentimental desire to feel his coat over her shoulders, just as he would treasure her glove.

The young sailor rowed on vigorously in silence. Now and again, a great black cloud drifted across the moon, and the boat and its occupants were in semi-darkness for some minutes.

"Are you not rowing a little too fast, considering the darkness?" she asked.

"Perhaps I am," he rejoined, "I've become so serious. I didn't know how fast I was pulling."

"One can be serious without being furious—and silent," she answered, rather petulantly.

"Why do you think I'm furious?"

"I judge by your resolute face and reckless sculling."

"But I'm not furious. Still, I'm trying to be serious, since you prefer me so."

"I didn't say that, Sidney—I mean Mr.——"

"No, you don't. You mean Sidney. And Sidney I'll be called, or nothing," said the young sailor firmly.

"Well, I didn't say that I preferred you serious."

"I think you did or implied it—at a time when I felt more serious than I ever felt in my life—Elsie—I——"

"Hush, I hear some one coming!" she cried, and listened. But her warning came too late, for they



crashed into a boat coming up-stream, and one of Sidney's oars was shattered in the collision, while his wrist received a nasty wrench in trying to extricate it. Elsie did not scream, but uttered a suppressed, "Oh, dear, dear!"

"Why the devil don't you learn the rules of the river, before you venture on it!" fiercely came from the darkness.

"It's as much your fault as mine, is it not, my friend?" retorted Sidney to the profane stranger.

"That shows your gross stupidity. You've got a coxswain, and I've not. Besides, you were rowing as if the devil were after you."

The moon had been for some time obscured by a dense cloud, so they could only discern the shadowy figure of the speaker. But Elsie at once recognized the voice of Tom Pleet.

"What's your number?" shouted the poet, as they drifted apart. "I shall hold you responsible if there's any damage done to my boat."

"I don't know," replied Sidney.

"Oh, that game won't do. I shall follow you, and find out if you don't give it to me."

Elsie eagerly whispered the number to Sidney, and he called it after Tom; who then continued on his way as if satisfied.

"That fellow's voice seemed familiar," observed Sidney, as he straightened the boat with the single oar.

"It's Tom Pleet. I thought you recognized him."

"He of all men in the world! That is strange. What is he doing here at this time of night?"

"Oh, he often comes on the river to muse and meditate on moonlight nights."



"You didn't speak to him?"

"Oh, I—I—had no desire to, because he acted so—so—well, quite rudely over the matter—so utterly selfish. He never even asked how we had fared in the collision, as most men would have done."

"Well, I was really to blame."

"Not entirely. I ought to have kept a better lookout," said his companion, with a tone bordering on humiliation.

"How far have we to go; can you make out the landmarks?" he asked, ignoring her regretful tone.

"About half a mile, I imagine."

"I think we shall get on about as fast by drifting with the current as by pulling with one oar."

"I think so, too. There! the moon is coming out again. Oh, isn't it glorious! But won't you feel cold now, without your coat, Sidney?"

She looked admiringly at his clinging snowy shirt, which showed the muscular proportions of his shoulders to advantage.

"No, oh, no," he replied, "not in the least." After a pause, he continued, "Don't you think it would be wiser if I were to sit beside you and help to keep the lookout?"

"Perhaps it would; it might be safer at any rate," she assented, smilingly.

"Unless I become frivolous again, eh?" taking the seat beside her.

"Oh, I don't care," she gasped, as if her heart had been relieved from a great fright or burden. "I prefer you to be frivolous to being so desperately serious."

"Ha, ha! even though you know something that I don't know."

"But you do know it."



"Oh, do I? How stupid I am. Let me see, what is it I know?" holding his forehead in his hands, with a burlesque effort at reflection.

"You are simply too ridiculous! Why, you know very well—it's—it's most unbecoming for a girl to—to—laugh and giggle, and——"

"Did you giggle? I missed the giggle. Please giggle again?" quizzically.

"Oh, dear! do let me finish," petulantly.

"Me?"

"Me? How do you mean?"

"Why let you finish me."

"What nonsense! I mean my sentence."

"Which is also my sentence?" wistfully.

"Sentence."

"My condemnation."

"No, my own; for laughing and carrying on, as I've done to-night."

"I hope I shall never forget this delightful night!"

"Neither of us should act as we have done. Why, it's almost—almost as bad as—as—as——"

"Flirting?"

"Yes, thank you! It's an odious word, but——"

"Why, perhaps it was flirting."

"Perhaps it was," coldly. "You should know."

"So should you, Elsie."

"I! Oh, here we are at home!" she cried, looking up as they came abreast the boat-house.

Sidney threw out the boat-hook and held the little craft fast to the tiny wharf, and then said: "Now, let us finish this—this debate."

The moon was, by this time, floating in a comparatively cloudless sky, and the girl could see, by the working of the muscles of his face, that her companion



was in a determined mood. Sidney again took his seat beside her. She did not attempt to rise, so he continued:

“You accuse me of flirting, Elsie?”

“No, oh, no, not accuse—but, Sidney, is it not precious near it—when a young man is eternally devoted to *one* girl and lightly carries on with another,” she asked, pleadingly.

“Yes, it is. But oh, Elsie!” he cried, no longer able to restrain himself. “I am eternally devoted to but *one*, and you are the one. Elsie! Elsie!” he passionately cried, clasping her to his breast. “You are my only love! My eternal love!”

“Sidney!” she could only gasp, and, trembling in the ecstasy of her rapture, struggled to free herself, so that she might speak. But he pressed her more closely, feeling that he held all the treasure of the world in this sweet creature. There were distant footsteps on the gravel-walk which led to the boat-house, and the girl heard them approaching.

“Oh, Sidney, do let me go! There is some one coming. If it should be auntie. Listen!”

“Oh, my precious darling, tell me first that I am not mad! that you were not flirting—only as true love flirts!” holding her pretty face, now pale as the rays of the moon, between his hands and looking passionately into her soft brown eyes. “Tell me that I have not lived to-night in a fool’s paradise—that you love me. That you will be my wife, Elsie!”

She hesitated and cast down her eyes in confusion. That brief instant seemed an eternity to him, for the footsteps came nearer and nearer.

“Oh, do let me go! do you not hear some one? If we should be seen!”



"I will *never* let you go," he replied, his brain in a mad whirl, "until you tell me. Do you love me?"

Her face softened, her gentle brown eyes were lifted to his, and became sweetly humid; then she burst forth with such intensity of feeling and emotion as he had never thought her capable of.

"Love you, Sidney! Yes, yes, yes! more than I ever thought it possible to love!"

Then impulsively her soft warm lips, sweet and tender as the petal of a rose, sought his, and for one blissful moment they were oblivious of the world.

In the next they heard the melodious voice of Nelly Shy exclaim: "Wal, I'd give ten dollars for my Kodak—and the sunlight! It's the—the—wal, the sweetest picture I've seen since I've been in England. Please don't move—I'll retire. I am ashamed of myself. I am really."

"Oh, Miss Shy!" cried the girl in utter confusion. "What will you think!"

"Don't fret about me! Concerning this affair I don't think—I'm as incapable of giving evidence as a mummy. I'm dried up, from this on."

"Ha, ha! you're a brick," cried Sidney.

"Thanks. But what have you done with Sir Richard? Thrown him overboard so you could spoon by yourselves?"

"Oh, no, he was detained, and is to drive over later," replied the lover.

"Oh, I'm glad to hear he's safe."

The boat was housed, and the congenial trio made their way to the house. If one of them had happened to look back he would have seen Tom Pleet, sitting in his boat watching them with a face distorted with anger. For, after a little reflection, he had recognized



Sidney's voice, then turned back, followed the pair, and witnessed the love episode which so delighted Nelly.

When Sir Richard returned, about one o'clock, his wife was not in a pleasant frame of mind.

"I'm surprised at you, Richard," she said. "What could you be thinking of to send a mere girl like Elsie home alone with a young man—a sailor, too. You know what sailors are?"

"I know what Sidney is—he is instinctively a gentleman, and doesn't merit your indiscriminate suspicion."

"Fudge! Men are men. You cannot know his private character—and think of the impropriety."

Her spouse did not reply.

Elsie had retired before her uncle returned. Before going, Miss Shy had joined her and said:

"Let me kiss you, dear. I feel so happy you've found him out—for he's been in love with you all through. Oh! I'm tickled to death! Good-night, love. I wish you perpetual happiness. If I could only stay and watch your courtship—it would make me young again. Sweet, sweet dreams!" And the full-blown damask rose tenderly kissed the budding "La France" good-night.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## LADY BRATTLE OBJECTS.

THE next morning Nelly Shy left by an early train to catch the Dover express at Clapham Junction. Lady Brattle had been so preoccupied with the departure of her enterprising guest that she had not noticed the change in Elsie. The ardent young lover chanced to find the girl of his heart in the conservatory, gathering a bouquet of roses for Miss Shy, so, snatching a kiss, he asked:

"May I tell Sir Richard this morning?"

"Yes, you audacious thief," she replied, mischievously dashing the dewy spray from the roses in his face. "And I shall tell auntie after you have gone to town."

"Must I go to town?"

"I think you should," was the reflective rejoinder.

"And leave you for a whole day?"

"Don't you think it would—would give you a better opportunity of talking to Uncle Dick?"

"Perhaps it would," Sidney answered, as she hastened away with the roses.

So at ten o'clock Dane accompanied the Q. C. to town. When they were comfortably seated alone in a luxurious compartment of the train speeding on to Waterloo, the young fellow began:

"Sir Richard, I have a confession to make. I've fallen in love."



"In love, Sidney!" cried his godfather, taken by surprise at the avowal. "Pray, with whom?"

"With Elsie."

"Elsie! Elsie!" echoed the elder man, with a faltering voice, for his conscience smote him as he remembered his wife's remarks of the night before. "Dear me!" he continued, after keenly scrutinising the young fellow's face. "When did this happen?"

"Last night."

"Oh! On the river?"

"Yes, I proposed and she accepted me. So—so, I seek your approval."

"Well, well, well! I never looked on you as a—a—well, a susceptible lad."

"Nor I. When I came to visit you, Sir Richard, I considered myself impervious to love. I—I suppose I should have been so with any other girl but Elsie."

"Oh, we all think that until the right one comes," was Sir Richard's rejoinder, with a faint smile on his face.

"I suppose we do. But I was vain enough to believe that I was superior to the average mortal in that respect; but I find that I am not."

Sir Richard made no comment; in truth, he was reflecting on what his wife would think of this revelation, and his face became troubled.

"Don't you approve of it, Sir Richard?" asked Sidney, wistfully noting the other's gravity.

"I can't say that I do, to be frank with you. And yet, having regard to your welfare, I can't say that I don't. But, Sidney, the approval does not lie with me. My wife is Elsie's guardian, and I have grave, very grave, doubts if she will sanction the union."

"Why?"



“That, my lad, I can’t explain to you now. But let the matter rest until this evening with the assurance that, personally, I have no objection.”

“Thank you, Sir Richard,” cried the young fellow in a burst of gratitude. But he took no interest in business that day; he was too anxiously speculating on what Lady Brattle’s verdict would be.

Meanwhile, about eleven o’clock, Mrs. Pleet called upon her neighbour, Lady Brattle, her fat countenance greatly distressed.

“I have something of the gravest importance to say to you, my dear,” said the chubby little woman, as she seated herself in the drawing-room.

“In regard to——”

“Your niece,” broke in Mrs. Pleet. “You know she has been coquetting with Tom, and leading him on——”

“Pardon me, Mrs. Pleet, I don’t know anything of the kind,” said Lady Brattle, sternly.

“Well, then, I do. She has driven the poor boy almost frantic. He has eaten hardly anything for three days—and all he has composed he has torn up. He’s so distracted with love——”

“That doesn’t concern me,” interrupted the other, with frigid hauteur.

“Oh, indeed,” replied Mrs. Pleet, with rising indignation. “Perhaps what he saw on the river last night may interest you,” she added, sneeringly.

“What did he see?” Lady Brattle asked with apprehension.

“Why, he saw your niece kissing and cuddling and carrying on like a common river-wench with that coarse young sailor.”

Lady Brattle turned pale. “I don’t believe it,” she, however, managed to gasp.



"Whether you do or not, it is nevertheless true! Tom would never have told me, but I saw that the poor boy was in great mental distress this morning, so I wormed it out of him. There!"

"It's the invention of a jealous lunatic!" cried Lady Brattle, now crimson with mortification.

"It's nothing but the truth! The haughty jade is a deceitful little flirt! She has deceived you——"

"I cannot allow you to speak of my niece in that way," rejoined Lady Brattle, with resentful loftiness.

"Well, she is, she is, to lead Tom on, and then jilt him for this vulgar sailor."

Lady Brattle could endure this no longer.

"Mrs. Pleet," she said, rising and moving towards the door with queenly hauteur, "pray, let us end this painful interview."

"You don't mean that you want me to go?"

"I must ask you to excuse me," was the answer of the irate Lady Brattle as she held the door for her departing guest and bowed disdainfully.

"Very well, then!" So the brewer's wife withdrew, and sped across the lawns in such an indignant flutter that she tripped on her skirts at every other step.

After that interview, it is hardly necessary to say, the two ladies were not on visiting terms. Meanwhile, Lady Brattle paced the room in a fever of mortification and helpless wrath, and then sent for Elsie.

When the girl entered, she read in her mother's stern face what to expect.

"Elsie," Lady Brattle began, "you told me the other day you would always give me your confidence;" the speaker's voice was painfully tremulous with constrained anger.



"Yes, mamma, I did."

"But you have not done so," was the stern reply.

"I was waiting for an opportunity to tell you this morning, mamma."

"You have been anticipated," her mother said frigidly; "but I will hear your version of the affair."

"Affair, mamma? Affair!"

"Yes, affair;" coldly receiving the girl's attempt at a caress.

"There is no affair," was the reply of innocent wonder. "I—I—love Sidney, and he—he—loves me, and asked me to be his wife last night. That is all."

"That is all!" echoed her mother. "And you accepted him?"

"I couldn't help it, mamma. I love him."

"Goodness gracious, child! is that any reason why you should forget your promise to me? Why did you not confide in me sooner?"

"I—I—did not know that he loved me—until—last night."

"But you must have known your own feelings when you told me of Tom the other day."

"Yes, I did, and should have told you, but Sidney then seemed so—so indifferent to me; though that was because he thought that I—I—liked Tom."

"Oh, your innocence is simply maddening. It appals me! You have seriously compromised yourself! For that sneaking Tom followed you and saw all that passed. He has told his mother. She has been here with the story, and the Lord only knows where else she will carry it!"

"Tom Pleet is not a gentleman, that is evident!" cried the girl, with blazing eyes.

"Oh, I care nothing about him. It's the way you



have compromised yourself with Sidney that annoys me."

"How can one compromise oneself with a man one intends to marry, mamma?"

"My dear, you exasperate me! You cannot marry him. It's madness to think of it!"

"Cannot marry him! Why, mamma?" asked the girl, turning pale.

"Why? why? There are a thousand reasons. He's a sailor. He cannot support you. He has nothing to live on but his pay, which is a mere trifle."

"But he will have, in time, mamma."

"But he is only a lieutenant, little above a common seaman."

"That is no reason I should not wait for him."

"His occupation leads him here and there all over the world. You do not know, my child, the moral life of sailors. In the nature of things, they cannot be constant to any woman."

"Sidney will be, mamma. He has never loved before."

"My dear, your simplicity is very refreshing; but at present it provokes me. I tell you, once for all, you can never marry him."

"Mamma?" was the girl's pathetic rejoinder, as she gazed at her mother, with tears floating in her tender brown eyes. "Never?" she asked, after a pause, caused by a deep-drawn sob.

"Never," replied her mother decisively. "You think me heartless, my dear, but I will not permit you to pass through the married misery I have passed through! Left alone for months together, with a heart yearning for love, and eating itself out with mistrust and jealousy."



"But, mamma, I can never be jealous of Sidney. He is truth itself."

"So I thought, my child, of the man I loved; but he repaid my devotion with base deception. Ah, Elsie! I loved as intensely as you do, but my early life was wrecked, and by my own folly."

She did not tell the girl that the man she had loved so blindly was not her father.

The mother and daughter talked on for a long time, until Elsie passionately cried: "Well, mamma, my first duty is to obey you; but I have promised Sidney to be his wife, and I shall be, if he ever claims me."

Lady Brattle recognized in this defiant, indomitable spirit some of the Gallic traits of the girl's father, and she feared its purport.

The dinner that evening was a painful function to all concerned, in marked contrast with the animation of the evening gatherings that had gone before.

Lady Brattle acquainted her husband with all the facts before the meal, and together they decided on the course that must be taken.

Sir Richard Brattle dreaded his wife's tongue. There was no counsel at the bar his superior in keen, cutting sarcasm, in penetrating ridicule, and in lashing, condemnatory phrase, barbed with stinging satire. But he loved his wife devotedly, and, therefore, like many another man, in the gallantry of his nature, he could not retort with the same weapons he would use so effectually against a masculine adversary.

"Sidney must leave to-morrow," said his wife, as she joined the Q. C. in his study after dinner.

"To-morrow! Oh, come, my dear, that is too——"

"Yes, to-morrow. No man with any judgment



would have introduced such a young rake into his family."

"Rake! Betsy, you are talking nonsense!"

"He must go, I say, and at once. He's not a fit husband for Elsie. A perfectly upright man would have spoken to you before entrapping a silly girl into a promise of marriage."

"Elsie does not deny she likes him, does she?" the husband asked, with his suave, cross-questioning manner.

"Of course, she likes him—that's the danger."

"Then the trapping, as usual, was not entirely one-sided."

"Fudge! You must tell him you cannot countenance the—the proposal."

"But I do, Betsy. I see no reason why, in time, they should not marry."

"You have nothing to do with it—I am the girl's guardian!" cried his wife, in a burst of uncontrolled rage.

"Oh, very well. Then you tell him. I certainly shall not send him away because he has dared to cast loving eyes on a girl who must have also made eyes at him. He is my godson, and as dear to me as your niece is to you. He shall remain here as long as he pleases. If you don't like it, you can take the girl off to—to—on a visit to some of your friends. That is final."

Sir Richard got up as if to leave the room, then his wife fell back on tearful persuasion, and ultimately wheedled him into acting as her counsel in the matter. So Sidney was sent for, and when he joined them the counsel was deeply moved.

"My lad," said his godfather, in a kindly tone, "I said to you this morning I had grave doubts as to my



wife's approval of your affection for Elsie. She now wishes me to say that she cannot sanction your marriage with her niece. Not that she has any objection to you personally, but because your means and your vocation, are—in her opinion—not calculated to lead to a happy marriage. For you must of necessity be away from your wife for long periods. And——”

“But, in time,” broke in Sidney, “I hope to improve my means, and leave the navy, as you know.”

“Is it not selfish,” observed Lady Brattle, “to ask a girl to wait for you such an indefinite time.”

“It may be, but——”

“Just so. It is,” she interrupted. “Therefore I must ask you to consider this affair at an end, in justice to her.”

“Does Elsie wish it to be so?”

“Yes. Elsie accepts my advice. It is a foolish, impetuous business, and I trust in your honour to pursue the subject no further.”

“Very well, Lady Brattle,” said the young fellow, his lips and square jaw firmly set. “It shall be as you wish, and you may rely on my word. But *only* until I have bettered my condition. If then——”

“Pardon me, I cannot discuss the future of my niece. She is young, her girlish views may change,” said Lady Brattle decisively.

“You may rely on me until they do,” said Sidney pointedly.

Later in the evening Sir Richard remarked to Sidney, “My wife and Elsie have decided to pay a visit to some friends. They are leaving in the morning, so, my boy, this unfortunate business need not deprive me of the pleasure of your company.”

“Oh, Sir Richard, it would be painful for me to re-



main after—after—well, I must say it—the happy days I've spent here in Elsie's company. So, if you will excuse me, I would rather go than stay."

So, with Sir Richard and his belongings, Sidney took his leave the next morning. The formal good-bye with Elsie—for Lady Brattle stood near—was in marked contrast with the blissful kiss he had stolen in the conservatory the morning before.

When they were speeding on to Waterloo, Sir Richard took from his pocket a little paper-box.

"Elsie told me to give you this," he said.

Sidney opened the box, and found a white rose, but he delicately concealed it from his companion.



## CHAPTER IX.

## EN ROUTE FOR EGYPT—LORD LASHBURN APPEARS INTERESTED.

ON a balmy November evening, six months after Sidney Dane's departure from Oxley House, Sir Richard, his wife and Elsie, were among the passengers on a P. and O. steamer sailing into the Bay of Naples. They were on their way to spend the winter in Egypt, for Sir Richard felt that he required a complete rest after two exceedingly busy (and profitable) terms. Lady Brattle had eagerly welcomed her husband's proposal to visit the Levant, because she hoped to add a chapter or two to her book on the "Domestic Life of Turkish and Egyptian Women." There was, however, another reason for travel, which was to arouse Elsie from the lassitude that had come over her once cheerful nature after Sidney's dismissal. While visiting Lady August in the early autumn, accompanied by Elsie, there they had met Lord Lashburn, who was on a visit to England. During their sojourn together Lord Lashburn had become so interested in Elsie that it somehow happened the heir to the Earldom of Mulvaney was now returning to his Egyptian diplomatic post on the same steamer.

As the vessel ploughed through the placid waters of the bay, Elsie sat in a steamer chair, gazing at the endless trail of smoke drifting away from the cone of Vesu-



vius. Lord Lashburn sat attentively beside her, pointing out the sites of Herculaneum, Pompeii, and other objects of interest, which were quite familiar to him.

"Oh, it must be awful to look into the crater of Vesuvius," cried the girl. "Uncle Dick says we must see it, though. Have you ever looked down?"

"Yes, once. That was enough. It quite satisfied my curiosity."

"Why?"

"Oh, it's about as near to Hades as one can get in this world. The suffocating, sulphurous gases, the unearthly rumbling, and awful volleying, and the hot, sticky vapours, cause you to remember your sins in a way that is both uncomfortable and appalling."

"Won't you go up with us, then?"

"Oh, I may, just to see how it moves you."

"Do you think I have so many sins?"

"Oh, no, no; far from it; but neither have you any emotions!" He was gazing into her eyes with as much intensity as thirty years of a life of restless, sensual pleasure could.

"Why do you say that?" asked the girl, looking earnestly at him.

"Because you haven't shown any, either of pleasure or pain, since I've known you."

"You must not say that, Lord Lashburn, or I may show some of pain."

Lady Brattle saw his devoted attitude, and carelessly remarked to her husband.

"I fear Lord Lashburn is becoming rather too attentive to Elsie."

"I'm glad you do, my dear," he said drily.

"Why? How do you mean, Richard?"

"I'm glad you '*fear*' his attentions; I thought you



approved of them. I'm pleased to hear you don't." The sarcasm was not lost on his spouse.

Now this was not what Lady Brattle expected, for she *feared* his lordship was not sincere, but she *hoped* he might be.

It is only just to her maternal instincts to say that, had she known the details of his life, she would have repelled his attentions with a shudder of revulsion. For after leaving Eton, as a dull, backward youth, Lord Lashburn had been sent round the world in care of a clerical tutor who winked at his foibles, because they suited his own love of ease and pleasure. The consequence was that in five years he returned from abroad a purposeless, premature *roué*, no less dull than when he started, his morality blunted by association with the cooing, twittering creatures of the Orient, whose favours were quickly won, and as lightly lost. In the last ten years—he was now thirty—Lord Lashburn had so intemperately imbibed all the sweets of life that every delicacy now seemed to his enervated palate as dry and juiceless as an orange in August. He had exhausted every sensual sensation, and only that of the eye and brain were left to him. He had no inclination for gambling or speculation of any kind; the only games he favoured were chess and whist, with a decided preference for the scientific, slowly-developing strategy of the former. He was a slow, methodical, slightly-built, weak-faced little man, with a tawny wisp of a moustache that would not curl, though he was constantly twisting and torturing it. His fine, mouse-coloured hair, was rapidly thinning at the crown of his head, while his complexion—which as a boy, had been rich and ruddy—had now the dull, mottled dyspeptic appearance of a badly boiled ham. He fancied



himself a coming diplomatist ; he was innately courteous, and moved and spoke with an habitual air of exhausted energy. But he was the pet of his aunt, the Countess of Killcutty, who made him a princely allowance, on which he largely depended. On his recent visit to England, she had seriously urged him to find a wife ; hence his marked attention to Elsie.

We need not follow our party on their travels in and about Naples, Rome, Athens, and Constantinople, where Lord Lashburn parted with them ; but before doing so he relieved Lady Brattle's anxiety by asking her permission to pay his addresses to Elsie.

At Constantinople they were joined by Nelly Shy who continued with them on their tour up the Nile.

When they reached Alexandria, in February, Lord Lashburn was domiciled at the Legation, and our party took up their abode at the Palace Hotel.

Before the British bombardment this hotel had been the palace of Bazan Pasha. It still fronts on the bay, not far from the road which leads to Remlah. It has beautiful gardens, filled with Oriental shrubbery, once sacred to the secluded walks of the ladies of the harem. The mellow, cream-coloured walls of the old palace are striped and fantastically frescoed in soft chocolate and saffron tints ; while here and there the plastering still bears the marks of the English shot and shell ; for the shrewd Swiss proprietor has found these dilapidations a source of interest and delight to the British tourist—hence a profit to himself.

Two days after Sir Richard and his party arrived in Cleopatra's city, H. M. S. *Psyche* steamed into the bay. Sir Richard and his godson had continued their correspondence, and the Q. C. had timed his arrival in Alexandria so that he might meet Sidney ; for the young



lieutenant had kept him informed of the *Psyche's* proposed cruise. The electric gun-attachment had been sold to the French and Italian governments for a substantial sum, so Sir Richard was desirous of congratulating his *protégé*."

A quarter of a mile further along the beach, there was another Pasha's villa. This also bore the marks of the British bombardment, for, at the time, it was occupied by one of the chief supporters of the rebel, Arabi Pasha.

On the third morning after her arrival in Alexandria, Nelly Shy had been for a walk up the Remlah road, returning by the beach with her Kodak strapped over her shoulder. In the course of her tramp she suddenly came upon three Egyptian ladies strolling along the sands. They were accompanied by a short bullet-headed Nubian, who, as soon as he saw Nelly approaching, grunted something to them. They quickly drew their yashmaks over their pretty noses, for the veils had evidently been removed, as if they were still in the seclusion of the harem.

"Good-morning, ladies," said Nelly affably. "Taking in a little ozone, eh?"

No one replied, the smaller of the three giggled, and the negro grunted. So Nelly addressed them in French, the dusky attendant meanwhile scowling and motioning her to go away.

Paying no heed to him, Nelly again asked:

"Can't any of you speak French or English?"

After a little hesitation, a slender, golden-haired creature answered in perfect English:

"We are not allowed to speak to strangers."

"Oh, ho! then, why can't this chocolate-coloured coon answer for you?"



The person indicated had been hurriedly leading the way to a door in a high cream-coloured wall, which came down to within fifty yards of the beach. As the American continued to accompany the ladies towards the garden door, the dusky attendant regarded her with a fierce scowl, accompanied now and again by a guttural protest.

When the latter reached the gate, he dexterously slipped the primitive wooden lock and passed his charges in; then, barring the way, he indicated, by a vehement gesture, his desire that Nelly should go about her business. The latter, not appearing to take the hint, he abruptly slammed the door in her face.

"Wal, if that don't beat all! I suppose that's Egyptian politeness," cried the American, in disgust.

She was turning away when the door was again opened, and a little Egyptian woman, with small, cunning, bead-like eyes, sallow, parched skin, and deeply wrinkled features, presented herself.

"Hallo! How d'ye do?" cried Nelly.

"What did ze madam want?" asked the woman, in a tone of resentment.

"Whose ranch is this?"

"Roonch? I no comprise. What eez roonch?"

"Do you speak English or French?"

"A leetle of ze French—and zome of ze Anglish."

"What place is this?"

"It is the villa of Zaras Pasha."

"Oh, and who are the gals I saw just now?"

"Ze ladies of ze harem."

"Harem! Did you say harem?" eagerly enquired Nelly. "Are you in charge?"

The woman grinned and nodded assent.

"Who is the queen or favourite wife?"



"Runa is ze favourite—at zis time."

"Oh, Runa, eh? I'd like to call on her. Here, present my card."

Nelly took a card from her case, and read to the wondering attendant, "'Nelly Shy, *Chicago Ladies' Journal*. Special Correspondent.' I'm going round the world," she added. "Present my compliments to Madame Runa, and say I should like to call upon her."

The woman shook her head and smiled deprecatingly.

"Won't she see me?"

"Ze Pasha will not allow ees ladies to know Franks," was the reply, with a cunning leer.

"But I'm an American."

"It is ze same."

"Look here—what's *your* name?"

"Zeyneb."

"Wal, see here, Zeyneb! I've *got* to see this harem. I'll make it a matter of business." The American took from her purse a crisp five pound note, which had a surprising effect on Zeyneb's glistening black eyes.

"This note is yours if you get me in. Catch on?"

The Egyptian menial looked at the note longingly, covetously, but sadly shook her dusky head.

"See here," continued Nelly, "don't your Pasha never go away for a night or so?"

"*Oui, oui!*" Zeyneb's face brightened. "He go to-morrow night to the Palace to dine with ze Khedive."

"Ha! can't you let me see round, then?"

"I will zee. Hush! Abloo is coming—put away ze money," she cried, as she heard footsteps approaching on the gravel-walk inside the wall. The robust negro again appeared at the door, and made impatient signs for Zeyneb to come within.



"What's *his* name?" asked Nelly.

"Abloo," replied the other.

"How d'ye do, Abloo? Charming weather for February." But Abloo, making no reply, she turned to Zeyneb and asked: "He's a *leetle* bashful, ain't he?"

"He no bashful—he no nozing."

"Fine-looking man, though. Your husband, I presume?"

"Husband!" exclaimed Zeyneb, with a look of mingled pity and contempt. "Ha, ha, ha! he eez nozing—same as ze—ah—what you call him. Ha, do not comprise ze Anglish word."

"What a fine model he'd make for a Roman slave. Just stand thar a minute, Abloo, my boy. I want your photograph."

Miss Shy unslung her Kodak, and moved slowly forward to focus the negro, when, with a howl of terror, he placed his hands before his face and fled through the door, an indescribable look of fear on his dusky visage.

"Wal, what ails the coon! did he think I was going to shoot?"

Zeyneb did not laugh; she was not quite sure of the mysterious box herself; indeed, she regarded it with mistrust, until the American had replaced it on her shoulder-strap.

"When shall I see you again?" she asked the mystified attendant.

"You come here to zis door at sunset. Eef ze Pasha ees go, I will show you ze harem."

"All right, I'll be here. Now, if you treat me straight, I'll make it two notes instead of one. See?"

"I comprise, madam. Remember, at sunset!"



So, with this understanding, Zeyneb disappeared through the doorway.

“Great snakes, what a find!” cried Nelly to herself as she made her way towards the hotel. “What an article this will make! I see the head-lines in the Journal. ‘*In the harem.—A life of sublime sensations.*’ BY ONE WHO HAS BEEN THAR’. Oh, I must get thar’ if I have to marry Mr. Zaras Pasha to accomplish it.”



## CHAPTER X.

## SIDNEY MEETS OLD FRIENDS IN CLEOPATRA'S CITY.

WHEN Sidney Dane came ashore, he went at once to the British consulate to learn at which hotel Sir Richard and his family were staying. He had obtained the address, and with Surgeon Dolby was sauntering along the Rue de Rosetta, on the lookout for a conveyance, when he was hailed in French from a passing carriage. The horses were stopped, and the occupant who wore the turban and garb of Pasha motioned for Sidney to come up.

"How do you fare, my young hero? You see, I know you," cried the personage in the carriage, as Sidney and his companion drew near. He spoke good English, but with a marked French accent.

"Ah, I zee, you do not remember me," offering his plump jewelled hand over the side of the carriage.

"Ha! Yes, yes, I do," exclaimed Sidney. "It is Commander Le Zaras," accepting the hand with a hearty grasp.

"It is ze same. But no longer commander. I am now Zaras Pasha. I have leave Burmah two years ago, and have take service with his highness, ze Khedive. I am commodore of ze Egyptian navy—zat is proposed by his majesty."

"Oh, indeed! I'm glad to hear it. That accounts



for this native costume, which prevented me from recognizing you."

"How long do you stay here in Alexandria, my dear friend?"

"About a week," replied Sidney.

"When can you come to dine with me?"

"Oh, any day. You remember my friend Dolby here; he and I are ashore on a little business."

"Ah, yes, and for a leetle spree, eh? Ha, ha, ha! I know you boys!" said Le Zaras, holding up his plump forefinger, his clear merry black eyes twinkling with roguish mirth. "Ha, yes, I know you lieutenants."

"Pardon me, monsieur," broke in Mr. Dolby, "but you don't know our friend Dane; he is a perfect Joseph, I assure you. I never knew *him* to spree."

"But he may become a David in such a fruitful land as *zis*," rejoined the Pasha, with a hearty chuckle.

Sidney deprecated this intended compliment, and they talked on other matters for some time; the Pasha proffering his influence in any way that would make their sojourn in the city agreeable.

Victor Le Zaras was now a great, fat man, with large, bright black eyes, and a long, tapering beard, which covered a goodly portion of his breast. His complexion was bright and fresh, with that light olive tinge peculiar to the natives of southern France. One saw at a glance that in his younger days he had been a handsome man. His once dark, glossy hair was now streaked with grey; but there was not a sign of baldness; indeed the graceless old scamp carried his sixty years remarkably well. Like most corpulent men, he always appeared in the best of humours, and told shady, cerulean stories, and roared at them, with that rollicking, jovial laugh of his, and with such contagious hearti-



ness, that it was impossible for any man of the world to be dull in his company. He was undoubtedly clever, keen and penetrating, though his active movements and genial animation were in marked contrast to his ponderous frame and puffy visage.

"Then will you dine with me to-morrow?" asked Zaras, as they were about to part.

"You are really very kind——"

"It ees not kindness, it ees gratitude. I am not what you call a good man, but I never forget an obligation. You saved my life, so you are dear to me as ze apple of my eye."

"Oh, don't speak of that," replied Sidney. "But where shall I find you, Monsieur Le Zaras?"

"At the Villa Karava, on the Remlah road. But I will send my carriage for you. What hotel is yours?"

"I shall be at the Palace Hotel, I presume," answered Dane.

"Ah, that is near. I will send for you to-morrow, or the next day. Adieu! or, as we say here, Allah be with you!"

"Adieu!" rejoined Sidney, returning the Pasha's graceful salute as he drove off.

At the Palace Hotel Sidney found Sir Richard seated on the verandah, gazing at the sea. The genial advocate received the young fellow with demonstrations of genuine pleasure.

The Q. C. had met Mr. Dolby in London, so, while the latter was arranging for their rooms, Sidney eagerly enquired for the ladies.

"Oh, her ladyship is about somewhere. She is busy on that book of hers just now—in her room, perhaps," answered the Q. C.



"Well, Sir Richard, how have you enjoyed your tour so far?" asked Sidney.

"Hem!—well, moderately—and mildly. Hem! well you see—my wife is with me," replied Sir Richard with a dry suggestive cough, and a facetious look of martyrdom, half real and half feigned.

Sidney wisely ignored the disparaging allusion to Lady Brattle, and remarked:

"You certainly deserve a holiday after your arduous duties."

"I believe you! I was exceedingly busy last term; got through five breach-of-promise and three nauseous divorce cases; so I really needed some fresh air. Naples was light and gay, suited me to a T, but—my wife. Venice, Rome, Constantinople, full of gay possibilities, but—my wife. Now I am in Egypt, a veritable land of promise, overrun with soft-eyed Syrians, but—well—my wife. Now take my advice, Sidney, and never get married until you are forty; certainly not until you have twice visited the chief cities of the world, and are perfectly satisfied that there's nothing more in the shape of female loveliness you care to flirt with."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed his godson, "I am quite satisfied on that score already, Sir Richard."

"But you are not forty, my boy."

"By which you would imply I am incapable of judging."

"Just so, but I mean no disparagement."

"That is discouraging." After a serious pause, the young fellow continued, with a note of anxiety in his voice:

"Do you know, sir, I hoped to secure your assistance to—to obtain what you find so—so burdensome—a wife."



"But I'm generally considered of more service in getting rid of one. And, I must confess, I prefer that part of my practice to the one you propose."

"Ha, yes, I know, but——"

Sidney left the sentence unfinished, having a vague feeling that he was being discouraged for some reason. They sat for some minutes silently gazing across the semicircular bay, its placid blue waters without a ripple, and its slovenly native craft moving slowly over its surface.

At length the young fellow could no longer keep back the question that was uppermost in his mind.

"I hope Elsie is well?" he asked. "Is she here?"

"Yes, oh, yes. I saw her not long since in the drawing-room with Lord Lashburn."

"Lord Lashburn?"

"Yes, do you know him?"

"No, but I've heard of him," answered Sidney, glancing enquiringly at his godfather.

"He came from England in the same steamer with us. He took a great fancy to Elsie, and my wife took a greater fancy to him—or possibly to his prospective title and estates; for he is the only son of the Earl of Mulvaney."

Sidney was taken aback with this revelation, but only for an instant.

"You know, sir, I only gave up my—my attentions to your niece conditionally, until I had improved my—my monetary position. As you know, I have now a—a—well, a modest fortune from the sale of our patent, with prospects of still more. So, frankly speaking, I want permission to address your niece."

"Take my advice, my boy, and don't," said his godfather with a kindly voice. "You know Lady Brattle



is her legal guardian, and dislikes sailors. You have perhaps heard that my predecessor was a naval officer."

"Yes, I have heard something of it. But, Sir Richard, have I *your* permission?"

"With all my heart, my lad. But remember I am only a junior counsel in this case. Lady Brattle is my senior—my leader. Egad! I may say judge, jury and supreme court of appeal, all in one."

"Then you consider the verdict doubtful?" asked Sidney with a grave face.

"Very. I'm sorry to say, I do. But are you quite sure of the co-respondent—hem!—I mean the fair petitioner?"

"I'll stake my life on Elsie's constancy."

"So would I. No flattery will spoil her, no brilliant title allure her from the man she has set her heart upon; I feel sure of that."

"Sir Richard, you give me hope—your words fill my heart with joy. Though I knew she——"

"But are you the man—hush! here comes Karava Bey. We'll talk of this later."

At this juncture a thick-set, middle-aged Egyptian, with a spotted, dull, saffron complexion, and close-cut, blue-black hair and beard, sauntered along the verandah and joined them.

"Ha, Karava! I have been expecting you all the morning," said Sir Richard, rising and extending his hand.

"I was detained at the Embassy," replied the other apologetically.

"This is Sidney Dane, son of an old friend of mine," said the Q. C., presenting them. "And this, Sidney, is Karava Bey, member of the Khedive's Corps Diplomatique in London."



"We have met before, I think," said Karava.

"Yes," replied Sidney, "at the Admiralty banquet in London."

"You are right," said Karava. Then looking enquiringly from one to the other, he remarked: "I hope I did not interrupt some confidence, some business?"

"No, no," replied Sir Richard, with a humorous glance at Sidney. "I was only advising my young friend not to commit the folly of matrimony, but he is determined to take a wife."

"Oh, poor fellow!" observed Karava, "I pity you if you must select one on the English system—from the puzzling roulette of society."

"Oh, you grizzly old cynic! I believe your nation are all sceptics," said the jovial little Q. C.

"Is your Egyptian custom any better?" asked Sidney.

"I venture to think so."

"Less chances of drawing a blank, eh?" put in Sir Richard.

"Yes, for an Egyptian, you know, is allowed four wives——"

"And may draw *four* blanks, instead of one," said the Q. C., as he offered Karava and Sidney each a cigar from his case.

"I think I have told you," began Karava, after lighting his weed, "that my father was a Greek banker, my mother an Egyptian, and I was born and bred in the harem. When I came of age my father bought me four beautiful Circassian girls——"

"A very obliging father, I'm sure," observed his elder companion drily.

"It was then a custom——"



"The sons in England usually attend to that delicate matter themselves," broke in Sidney.

"And when the governor finds it out," continued Sir Richard, "he is generally so ill-bred as to make a row about it."

"Piff! piff! it is so all over the world. But, listen! By written contract I made the most favoured one of the four my legitimate wife—the others were only odalisques."

"Hum!" mused the advocate, "odalisques! Merely a polite synonym for our prohibited plurality. I see, I see."

"As I grew older," continued Karava, "I bought other girls, ostensibly as maids to my wife——"

"Of course, of course!" broke in Sir Richard with facetious banter. "This same old game is practiced in France, I've heard."

"Will you let me finish, you satirical old *roué*?"

"Ha, ha, ha! But I say, Karava, you pass for a bachelor in London; where *are* your wives? Oh! oh! Fie! fie!"

The Egyptian shrugged his shoulders indifferently, and replied: "Gone! Where, I do not know or care?"

"Ah," sighed the Q. C., "that is the charm of your religion. I fear I sometimes wish I could shake off mine as lightly."

"When that rascal Arabi organized the revolt in '82, my father was induced to support him, and was consequently ruined. He died almost a beggar in Athens, and our family was scattered to the winds."

"What a complete wreck that vagabond made of everything."

"Yes, at the time of the bombardment that villa you



see yonder," pointing along the bay, "with the high striped walls running down to the bay, was my home."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed the Q. C. sympathetically. "What a romance your life has been, Karava."

"That door you see in the wall leads to the harem gardens. As a boy I have often bathed on the beach yonder, by moonlight, surrounded by my father's odalisques. Now my home is in the possession of a gross parasite of the Khedive. Pah!"

After a pause, Sir Richard asked: "Is it true that in your high-class circles the groom never sees the face of the bride until the wedding-night?"

"It was once so. A friend of mine had a queer experience; he was terribly sold by the *Khatbeh*——"

"*Khatbeh*? What is she—the mother-in-law?"

"No, a professional match-maker; the class are the most consummate liars we have in Egypt."

"Ah, well, much the same thing. Well?"

"It was in that very harem-garden, where Mademoiselle Elsie is going," pointing to the girl as she passed through the gate indicated, which was some little distance from them.

Sidney saw his divinity, and his face brightened; he threw away his cigar and hastily rising said: "I hope you will excuse me, Monsieur Karava, but I have not seen Miss Lisle yet," and with this apology he hastened after her.

The two elder men exchanged glances of amusement.

"Our lieutenant is sailing for the haven of matrimony, eh?" asked Karava.

"Yes, yes, but he's steering by the magnet of love."

"And yet he may come to grief in the fogs of infatuation."



"Not with such a pretty beacon, you everlasting pessimist! Well, let us get back to the story."

While Karava went on with his story, Sidney followed Elsie. She had got fairly into the garden before he overtook her, and it seemed to him that he had never seen so much grace in the movement of a woman before. As he drew near, she turned, and with a start and gasp of surprise, cried:

"Why, Sidney!" Then with a more demure, reserved tone continued: "How do you do, Mr. Dane? Why, how you startled me. I—I had no idea it was you."

"How do you do?" he said warmly, as they shook hands.

"Why, what a surprise, Mr. Dane?"

"I hope a welcome one, Elsie?"

"Oh, certainly. I'm always pleased to see old friends. Have you seen Uncle Dick?"

"Yes, I've just left him with Karava. We were smoking on the verandah as you came out."

"Oh, Karava! That horrid, cynical man! Was he telling a story?"

"Yes, he was; why do you ask?"

"Oh, because Uncle Dick says he has such a fund of Oriental anecdotes, but they are only fit for masculine ears, Auntie says."

"So I should judge from what I heard."

"What story was he telling you?" she asked with maidenly inconsistency and mother Eve's curiosity.

"Pray, don't ask me," said he, evasively. "I really didn't pay much attention."

"Oh, I know you men always do. Please tell me." They were seated under a great spreading palm, in a snug corner of the old harem garden, with myriads of



Eastern flowers bursting into bloom, and exhaling delicious odours about them.

"Please do tell me what Karava said," she poutingly asked again.

"Well then," he replied, "he said an Egyptian lover never sees or speaks to his sweetheart until they are alone on their—er—on the bridal—hum—their honeymoon."

"Oh, I shouldn't like that," said Elsie.

"Nor I, either."

"I don't think it so nice as the English way, do you?"

"It is not to my fancy. Lovers must be truly blind in Egypt."

"Ha, ha! A sort of love in Egyptian darkness."

The thin ice of restraint was now broken.

"Well, some English lovers don't object to darkness," said the young fellow quizzically.

"Do you think not?"

"I seem to remember two who didn't."

Elsie looked grave at this, so he hastened to say: "Just think, there's no flirting at tennis, here."

"No cross-country driving."

"No moonlight walks together."

"No strolling by the river together—as we did at Oxley House."

The personal pronoun in conjunction with the word lovers encouraged the young fellow, so he went on with his old buoyant gaiety, which she liked so well.

"No drifting down the shady reaches, whispering words of tenderness, to the lulling rhythm of the rustling leaves—as the novelist says."

"And no ruthless reprimand from your aunt when that sweet time is o'er—as the novelist neglects to say."



“Ha, ha, ha! They have no lovers’ quarrels here.”

“Consequently no tears of regret when he has gone,” she said musingly.

“Oh! Do girls have such regrets?”

“As the novelist says——” she hastened to add, archly avoiding his admiring gaze.

“No sweet making-up after quarrels—no kissing away her tears.”

“Kissing away tears? Oh!” Her soft brown eyes now meeting his with a searching, jealous glance. “Have you kissed away tears?”

“Eh? Oh!—as the novelist says,” he answered gaily

But she was not satisfied; she knew he had never kissed away her tears, for she had treasured every endearment, so she continued seriously,—

“But *did you ever* make up like that?”

“I? Oh, no. How could I at sea?”

“But you spoke as if it were an echo of the past. *Never?*”

“Never—but I should like to.”

“Like to what?” pensively kicking the tiny shingle on the path.

“Kiss away the tears—your tears,” he said tenderly, yearning to clasp the sweet girl in his arms, for he read the signs of pleasurable emotion as well as if they had been naval signals.

She looked up, and, meeting his ardent gaze, said:

“Ah, but we shall not quarrel,” then, with a little gasp at her restrained emotion, “besides, we’re not lovers, Sidney.”

His dark eyes looking merrily into hers, and lines of mirth playing about his lips, he forcibly took both her hands in his, and ironically said: “No, we are not lovers, Elsie—are we?”



"Are we? Why, Sidney!" she repeated with fluttering timidity, "are we?"

"We are, Elsie, we are!" he cried rapturously, drawing her beautiful head against his shoulder. "We are, dearest, so let your crystal tears flow and I will kiss them away!"

Somehow her right arm had been drawn over his shoulder and now circled his neck, and her left hand was imprisoned in his, as he again and again pressed her velvet lips with fierce, burning kisses.

"Oh, Elsie! Elsie! how I have longed for this moment!"

She falteringly tried to draw herself away. "No, no, no!" she cried, "you must not talk like that. Remember auntie's dictum at our parting."

"Never to speak to you of love again?"

"Yes."

"But I did not promise. Besides, my darling, it is of marriage I wish to speak now. I've improved my position, I've a snug little fortune, sweetest, which will be enough for our modest wants."

"Ah, but my aunt is still opposed to you," Elsie answered, with a regretful sigh.

"Opposed, or not, I shall speak to her to-day, Elsie."

There was resolution in his firm-set jaw, and she saw he meant it. Therefore, she said:

"No, no, I would not *to-day*, Sidney. Wait a little longer—perhaps——" she hesitated.

"But, why not?"

"Well," she said demurely, and with a shy hesitation which puzzled him, "she has told me Lord Lashburn may do me the honour to propose."

"Ah, but Elsie, Elsie, you don't mean——"

She went on gravely, without heeding his words:



"She said it would gratify her exceedingly if I looked upon him in a favourable light——"

"But, my darling, you can't——"

"But I have." Even now he did not see the mischief in her eyes.

"Have, have! How?"

"In Rome by the electric light, in Naples by moonlight, in Athens by gaslight—and here by daylight. And yet——"

He now caught the twinkle as she looked up.

"Ha, ha, ha! And yet?" he eagerly asked.

"He does not shine by any light."

"Then you will not listen to his proposal?"

"Oh, but I must," she said, rising and moving towards the gate.

"Must? I don't understand."

"Because a girl receives but little attention in society, until she has *declined* at least one distinguished suitor," she answered, with an arch glance at him.

"Declined! Ha, ha! I like that!"

"Oh, Sidney—couldn't you see I was teasing you just to satisfy my vanity and see how much you really cared for me."

And so they talked on for an hour in perfect happiness, and rambled about that old-world garden where many an Egyptian girl had sighed her heart out for just such a companion as this young sailor.

As Sir Richard had said to Sidney, Elsie had been conversing with Lord Lashburn in the hotel drawing-room. But, presently Lady Brattle entering, the girl excused herself and, as we have seen, fell in with more congenial company.

When she had gone, Lord Lashburn observed to her aunt:



"Do you know, I suspect, I am not entirely agreeable to your niece."

"Oh, I assure you, you are quite mistaken, my lord," replied her ladyship, with a charming smile.

"I hope so, I hope so," he replied reflectively.

"Elsie's coyness must not be mistaken for aversion."

"But how quickly she slipped away when you entered the room just now."

"Ah, perhaps you had been addressing to her some tender sentiment."

"Approaching it—approaching it—in a diplomatic way," his lordship replied languidly.

"Then what more natural that she fled confused. I was *de trop*."

"Possibly, possibly," he said, meditatively twisting his mouse-coloured moustache. Then, he added, after some reflection: "Yes, yes, possibly she *was* confused."

"You, Lord Lashburn, are a man of the world, Elsie is as guileless as—as a wild flower; therefore, the most delicate hint from you would cause a heart-flutter not easily concealed."

"True, true. Very true," observed his lordship, much flattered.

"Elsie is so free from conventional coquetry, so completely heart-whole,—I—I——"

"Yes, yes, Lady Brattle, that is my difficulty."

"Difficulty?"

"Ya-as," he replied slowly. "One may easily frame a telling compliment to a many-seasoned fashionable beauty, but one's polished epigrams go for nothing with a girl so—so—so charmingly innocent of what one means."

"But that should add to the lover's zeal," was the cunning rejoinder, with a benign smile.



“Ya-as, ya-as; but I dislike zeal. I could never understand why a man should risk his neck in the hunting-field. Now a game of chess is quite as stimulating to me, and less enervating.”

“Ah, you, my lord, are inherently a strategist, hence, a diplomatist.”

“No. It is all discipline, I assure you. As the marquis used to say of me, ‘Lashburn conceals his zeal in Oriental apathy, but his apathy is tinged with a seeming appreciation which is flattering.’” His lordship dropped the glass from his eye, the better to see how his companion took this. “Now you see my difficulty with a girl so extremely coy.”

“Surely that is not a blemish,” observed her ladyship with some asperity. “Coyness in such a girl as Elsie is an instinct, not a carefully cultivated virtue.”

“True, true,” he replied complacently, “though a novelty in girls of to-day, you will admit.” After a pause, he continued: “May I hope for a little *tête-à-tête* with Miss Lisle in the harem gardens this evening after dinner?”

“She will be delighted, I am sure.”

“And you think my—my suit will be favourably received?”

“I have no doubt of it, my lord.”

With this understanding they joined the others on the verandah. At the first opportunity Lady Brattle led her husband aside, and with ill-concealed elation asked:

“Has it occurred to you, Richard, why Lord Lashburn has been so—so partial to our society since we came to Alexandria?”

“No, Betsy, no, I can’t say it has.”

The eminent counsel always called his wife Betsy



when in a facetious mood. And Karava's story had amused him.

“Try,” said his spouse, with a complacent smile, the while struggling to subdue her satisfaction.

“Having a little flirtation with Nelly Shy perhaps?” Now the Q. C. very well knew the reason, but ventured this remark just to balk his wife, for he saw she was bursting to tell him something important.

“Bless me, Richard! how dense you are!” Then in a triumphant, confidential tone, she said: “He will propose to Elsie to-night.”

“Ho! ho! Oh, my!” cried her husband, and his eyes wandered to the gardens, where he could just discern the lovers moving towards them.

"You don't mean to say, Richard, you did not anticipate this."

"I do, Betsy, I do. Your tactics are so exceedingly surprising—quite Napoleonic."

"*My* tactics! *my* tactics! Lord Lashburn's tactics, you mean."

“ You may possibly think so, Betsy ; but the love of mating is so inherent in your sex, you don’t notice it. You don’t really.”

“Fudge! fudge! He was smitten with her from the first.”

“Hum! So you think she likes him,” he musingly observed, a mischievous twinkle in his eyes and suppressed merriment playing about his lips.

"Of course. She tries to conceal it with a demure coquettish shyness, but she's flattered all the same. She can't hoodwink me."

"Ha, ha! Ho, ho! Possibly not, Betsy," rejoined her spouse, smothering his laughter with difficulty.



Possibly not, Betsy—hum! but just cast your eye on the couple approaching.”

Lady Brattle, placing her glasses over her shapely nose, gazed in the direction indicated, and then exclaimed:—

“Why, it’s Sidney Dane!”

The lovers had been preoccupied, and were close upon the elder couple before they noticed them.

“So, so,” cried her ladyship, with mounting wrath. “So, so. Indeed!”

“Oh! Didn’t you anticipate this?” asked Sir Richard, ironically mocking her.

“Oh, you traitor!” she hissed with feline intensity.

“Ha! ha! Ho! ho! She couldn’t hoodwink you. Oh, no!” said the Q. C.

The lovers stopped abashed.

“Now, what does this mean, sir?” she asked of Sidney sternly.

“Elsie has—consented——” he hesitated, her ladyship’s abrupt question quite confused him for the moment.

“Well, go on,” said Lady Brattle arrogantly.

“Auntie,” broke in the girl, “Sidney and I are——”

“‘Sidney! Elsie!’ Oh, indeed!” exclaimed her ladyship with imperious sarcasm. Then, sternly to Sidney, “By what etiquette, sir, do you presume to address my niece by her Christian name?”

“Lady Brattle, I love her,” answered Sidney unflinchingly.

“And I hold a brief for the plaintiff, my lud,” put in Sir Richard, facetiously placing one foot on a garden-chair and posing as if pleading in court.

Lady Brattle turned upon her husband angrily, and retorted: “Then he has a fool for his counsel.”



"Lady Brattle, I beg you to listen to my explanation, I——"

"Mr. Dane, I will not listen to you. You have again tried to steal the affections of an inexperienced girl. It's the trick of an unprincipled libertine—a fortune-hunter!" cried her ladyship, with mounting fury.

"Oh, no, no! Auntie, you shan't say that," interposed the girl.

"I protest, my lud, this is not regular," began the Q. C. in the same breath.

"Hold your tongue, Richard! As for you, sir, you are a sailor, a petty officer, without position or fortune—and you have the hardihood to presume——"

"Madam," said Sidney sternly, "I was about to explain my improved fortune——"

"Whatever your explanation," she interrupted imperiously, "I decline to consider you as a suitor for my niece's hand. If you have a spark either of manliness or of self-respect, you will not again attempt to win her affection. Come, Elsie, come with me."

And her ladyship stalked majestically into the hotel. But Elsie lingered behind, and plaintively said:

"Uncle Dick, where was your eloquence?"

"What can eloquence do, when a judge browbeats the counsel, ignores all protest, overrides every exception, and leaves the court. Bah! That's the sort of court we should have if women had their rights."

"Oh, Sidney. I fear it is hopeless," cried the girl. "She will never consent. Forget me! Go and fight for your country!"

"Fight!" replied her lover sardonically. "Time was when a man might rush to sea and get killed gloriously."

"Don't, oh, don't talk like that, Sidney!" pleaded the girl.



"Now we can only trust to the newly modelled iron-clads to drown us—ingloriously."

Her ladyship did not come to dinner that evening. Sidney, seeing that he was causing strained relations between Sir Richard and his wife, said that he would take rooms at another hotel.

"Do nothing of the kind, my boy," said his godfather.

"But she hates me; the case is hopeless."

"Perhaps not. We'll argue the case in chambers—I lodge with the court, you know. You stay here, and we'll fight it out."

So Sidney remained at the Palace Hotel.

Just as they were about to retire that night, Sir Richard drew his wife such an eloquent picture of her pandering and truckling to ensnare Lord Lashburn that she could not but own to herself it was true, though she angrily denied it. As her husband told her, she had become so dazzled and infatuated with the prospective coronet for the girl that she had lost sight of the despicable part she was playing to obtain it. And he concluded: "Just think of the brainless, selfish imbecile you would unite the girl to."

"I'll listen to no more of your brutal words," Lady Brattle cried at last. "But remember this: don't dare to meddle with Elsie's affairs again. If you do, you'll be sorry for it. I shall occupy the room with Elsie to-night." And with this hot shot, but inwardly baffled, she left him.

Lord Lashburn did not obtain his *tête-à-tête* with Elsie, but instead made the most of a flirtation with the irrepressible Nelly Shy, who, with true American homage, made every allowance for his lordship's sluggish eccentricity of manner and vacuity of mind, when



she learned he was the only son of an earl. Nelly played chess with some skill, and so the pair got on very well together; his lordship seeming to have a great admiration for her, and to be fascinated by her audacity.



## CHAPTER XI.

## A RECKLESS ADVENTURE.

NELLY SHY kept her appointment with the woman Zeyneb, and learned that Zaras Pasha would be away from home on the following night. At first she thought she would make the visit alone, but on reflection she decided to invite Lady Brattle to join her. So towards evening on the fourth day of their sojourn in the ancient city she sought her friend.

"Where do you think I've been to-day?"

"Oh, I can't imagine, you never miss anything," replied her ladyship.

"The Mosque! It's beautiful. Simply superb!"

"Did you venture into the Mosque alone?"

"Alone? Wal, I guess I did. Why shouldn't I?"

"And met with no mishap?"

"Wal, no, nothing to speak of. I was browsing about, happy as a coon in a cornfield, scooping in the whole show—when I noticed a mysterious door. It wasn't marked private, so in I went."

"Good gracious! How dared you? What was it?"

"The sacred shrine of the high priests, I reckon, for——"

"Gracious goodness, were you not frightened?"

"No," replied Nelly complacently, "but *they* were. It was rather gloomy and I ran plump against one of them. Scared! Great snakes! You'd ought to have



seen his face when he saw me. Guess he took me for a bird of Paradise, for he wilted, right thar. Wal, when he recovered he began to shoo at me as if I was an old hen. But I didn't budge. Not much!"

"What courage!" cried her friend admiringly.

"Pretty soon another one came up, and they tried to hustle me out; but I poked my Kodak at them and snapped it. Ha, ha, ha! Then you'd ought to seen them scoot. Reckon they thought it was a new-fangled gun."

"But how did you escape?"

"Oh, I strolled leisurely back; I didn't know but they might be unpleasant about it."

"Well, I must say, you are the most courageous woman I ever met," observed Lady Brattle, when Nelly had finished.

"Oh, by the way," continued Nelly, "would you like to look through a harem with me?"

"Goodness me! A harem?"

"Yes, I'd like you to take it in with me to-night."

"Take it in?"

"Yes, look it over. Thar's one along the bay, where a sleepy old Pasha keeps his wives."

"But how can *we* get in?"

"Oh, I've got the rocks."

"Rocks! rocks! What do you mean?"

"Dollars, dollars. We call them 'rocks' in the West, because they're pretty tough arguments."

"But the harem is sacred," persisted her companion.

"Generally, generally. But nothing is sacred to the American eagle—when it's on a dollar."

"Still, the old Pasha, who is he?"

"Oh, his name is Zebras or something of that sort.



But he's going to a banquet at the palace to-night, so his woman tells me."

"Why, this would be a sight worth seeing!" cried her ladyship, now fired with curiosity and enthusiasm.

"Wal, I—I should whimper. Just think what a sensation you'd create with an article from your pen in the *Blue Review*."

"Yes, yes, it takes my breath away! It's a grand opportunity. I'll go with you. '*Exposure of harem life*.' What a catching title."

Thereupon Nelly explained how it was to be done, with the result that Lady Brattle entered upon an adventure that afterwards caused her many hours of regret.

After some debate, the two enterprising ladies decided that Elsie had better not accompany them; so the unhappy girl was left at the hotel with her maid.

Nelly had arranged with Zeyneb that Lady Brattle and herself should come disguised in cloaks and yashmaks, and drive up to the front entrance of the Villa Karava about ten o'clock, as if they were Egyptian ladies making an evening call. So at the time appointed, and under the guise of denizens of the harem, they set forth in high spirits.

Now it happened on that very morning that Sir Richard, Sidney, and the accomplished naturalist, Surgeon Dolby, had, like true Englishmen, taken a constitutional walk along the beach past the Villa Karava. On returning they came up with Zaras Pasha's three wives, accompanied by the negro Abloo, as when Nelly Shy had encountered them. Some hundred yards before they reached the trio, they noticed, scrawled in large letters in the moist sand, the names



of "Runa," "Ayros," and "Lisba" and then a little further on, the autograph "Lisba Trebelli."

"Lisba Trebelli!" cried Dolby, turning to Sir Richard. "Why, that was the name of a famous dancer at the 'Alhambra' two or three years ago."

"Of course it was," replied Sir Richard, "and devilish seductive she was. Did you know her?"

"Very well, indeed. She was originally a *protégée* of Admiral Blank, you know. But deserted him for an Austrian count."

"Yes, yes, I remember the affair; but this can't be the same."

"I'm not so sure of that. It's surprising what a fancy these modern Egyptian Pashas have taken recently for the accomplishments of French and English ladies. Let us overtake these houris and see if we can recognize any of them."

So they increased their pace and presently came abreast of the so-called houris.

The ladies pretended to look in an opposite direction, but Dolby, thinking he recognized the figure and amber locks of the divine Trebelli—for their yashmaks were all drawn over their features—spoke aloud, as if continuing a narrative with his companions.

"Yes," he said, "when Admiral Blank found that she had gone off with Count Splugen, he swore like a Chinese pirate. I don't blame him, for Trebelli was a deuced pretty woman."

Suddenly the houri he had suspected turned to him, hesitated a moment, then, with a gleam of recognition, and partly removing her yashmak asked:

"Are you not Surgeon Dolby?"

"I am, mademoiselle, at your service; and you, if I'm not mistaken, are Mademoiselle Trebelli."



"Yes, yes," she answered with some emotion, and quickly covered her face again; "but do not let this mute see you talking to me; he's deaf and dumb, but alert with his eyes. Pretend to be looking for shells, and speak in a low voice."

"Oh, come on, Dolby," urged Sir Richard, "you'll get yourself into trouble."

"Yes," added Sidney, "look how that surly nigger is glaring at us."

But Dolby paid no heed to them, so they walked on without him, while he, as directed, began to loiter and pick up shells, keeping up an intermittent dialogue with Trebelli.

"How came you here?" asked Dolby.

"Oh, it's a long story, and—well, not a pleasant one. Are you here for long?"

"Yes, a week."

"What hotel?"

"The Palace, yonder. How I should like a chat of old times with you—but it's impossible, eh?"

"Oh, I'm not sure; I could be ill and need you. If I do——"

By this time the ever-jealous Abloo had come to the conclusion that there was some secret communication between the Christian dog and his master's sacred wife. The brief dialogue had taken up barely a moment, but now, with a savage grunt and a ferocious scowl at the unbeliever, Abloo drew the woman away.

With a gay laugh, Dolby blew a kiss after the ladies, and leisurely joined his companions.

Sir Richard rallied him on his audacious gallantry, and eagerly asked if it was really the divine Trebelli.

"Yes, there is no doubt of that," said Dolby, "but I didn't learn how she got into a harem."



Now Surgeon Dolby was one of those clever fellows who take the world easily and philosophically ; he was a handsome, middle-aged man, with a light sandy beard and soft blue eyes, who, had he chosen, might have become an expensive family physician in Wimpole Street or Cavendish Square. Having, however, early in life taken to the sea, he clung to it, because it gave him the leisure for study and the opportunity for collecting unique data, as well as specimens of natural science, while in foreign lands. Therefore, all ambition had been sunk in contentment with the life he led.

After dinner that evening, Lady Brattle said to her husband :

“ I am going out with Miss Shy this evening to call upon a friend.”

“ A friend ! ” echoed her consort surprised ; “ I didn’t know you had a friend here.”

“ Ah, but I have,” she replied with that disdainful, peevish perversity which the best of women will occasionally use when they are angry with their husbands. “ I shall not return until late, but will not disturb you, for I shall sleep with Elsie.”

They had not recovered, it may be said, from the disagreement of the day before, so one was quite as perverse as the other.

“ Oh, very well,” answered the Q. C. “ Then I shall accept Dolby’s invitation to see some of the sights of Alexandria.”

“ Just as you please, my dear,” said his wife, sweetly indifferent.

Two hours after this little tiff, Sir Richard, Mr. Dolby, Karava Bey, and Lord Lashburn, were in the latter’s Egyptian domicile smoking and disposing of dry “ Monopole,” when a note was brought from the



hotel for Mr. Dolby. It was marked "immediate" and had been forwarded from the hotel.

The surgeon excused himself, read the epistle, smiled, and then carelessly put it in his pocket. But his action had not escaped the alert Q. C., who asked

"Some one ill on the *Psyche*?"

"No," said Dolby, "it's not from H. M. S. *Psyche*, but from——"

"Another goddess, eh?" with a humorous leer.

"Yes, and, by the way, it contains a message for you," handing him the letter. "You may as well read the whole of it."

Sir Richard eagerly devoured the note, with a racy smile playing about his ruddy, clean-shaven visage and beaming from his merry blue eyes. When he had mastered its contents he facetiously exclaimed:

"Oh, fie, fie, Dolby! you're a sad dog. You must have impressed the sweet Trebelli before to-day."

"Oh, come, I say," broke in Lord Lashburn, "what's the joke? Pass it round."

"Shall we?" asked Sir Richard, with an unctuous chuckle.

"As you please; the invitation is as much yours as mine."

"Ha, ha! I've a good mind to," cried the elder man.

"But, no, it would not be gallant to the ladies."

"Oh, come now, that's beastly shabby," protested his lordship, with his elegant drawl. "What do you say, Karava?"

"Don't ask me. The best way to use a woman is to treat her as she treats herself, and waste no scruples over gallantry; sooner or later she will sacrifice you to her caprice, and then you will marvel at your foolish sense of honour with a being so ungrateful."



"What do you say, Dolby?"

"Oh, Karava is about right; somewhat too pessimistic and sweeping perhaps. But explain the matter, Sir Richard."

"Well, then, Karava. I've told you of the adventure we had this morning on the sands."

"Yes, with the cosmopolitan wives of the cosmopolitan Pasha," sneered Karava.

"This letter is from one of them. I'll read it to you.

"DEAR MR. DOLBY.—I am not at all well, and should like a consultation with you." (Oh, ho!) "Runa and Lisba are also ailing. We have just discovered that the Pasha has gone to spend the night at the Palace with the Khedive. If you come to the sea-gate at ten o'clock you will not find it locked, for we have bribed the old gardener and got the key. You had better bring your two friends, for Runa has taken a great fancy to that jaunty old boy with the rollicking eye. Now this is to be a perfectly proper little garden-party. Do come, for we can never tell when we shall be alone again.

"Yours sincerely,

"YOU KNOW WHOM!"

"Ha, ha, ha! What do you think of that?" asked the volatile Q. C.

"Nothing remarkable," answered Karava, puffing his cigar stoically.

"Would it be safe?" asked Lashburn.

"Safe enough—if you are not caught," replied Karava. "But don't forget that the harem is sacred, and that strangers discovered there may be despatched without ceremony," was the reply, uttered with a rayless smile.



"No, no, that's your little joke," said the lawyer.

"Oh, that's rubbish," put in Lashburn, but with a look of apprehension.

"No rubbish—it is the truth—it is the law! And I can assure you, you would require no coffin or burial-certificate if Zaras Pasha caught you in *his* harem. He would order his dusky eunuchs to strangle you and drop you into the bay without the least compunction. He is as ruthless as a barbarian."

Lord Lashburn looked convinced and alarmed, Mr. Dolby smiled sceptically," Sir Richard sighed, as if satisfied, and murmured:

"What a pity! poor girls, poor girls! Oh, Karava, how I should like to explore those gardens!"

"Ha," rejoined the Egyptian, "the man is not old whose heart is young."

"Oh, I say," put in Lashburn, "it's perfectly true about the Pasha going to the Palace. I was invited. Tarzic Pasha, Ashmut Bey, and O'Riley Pasha have gone. I know it's a gambling party."

"Yes, yes, there is no doubt of that," assented Karava Bey. "And," he added, "you would be perfectly safe if you confined yourselves to the gardens."

"Oh, we could do that, eh, Dolby?" eagerly asked the Q. C.

"*I* could," replied the surgeon drily.

"Then, by all means, let's risk it," urged Lashburn.

They had by this time imbibed enough Heidseck to make them reckless and merry; so the three Europeans decided to accept the invitation of the forlorn houris.

"You must be careful," Karava cautioned them, "to secure the garden-door when you get inside, and one of you should retain the key, so as to make sure of your retreat in case of surprise."



“ Oh, I’ll take charge of the key,” said Lashburn.

“ And you will need cloaks and turbans, for in the garb of Franks you would excite suspicion prowling about in the night. I will lend you, Sir Richard, one of mine. In the next square, Lashburn, you and Mr. Dolby will find a French Jew who will provide you with Mahomedan raiment—for a small consideration.”

“ Karava, you are a brick ! ” exclaimed Sir Richard. “ But I dare say you consider us reckless idiots.”

“ Not at all ; you are perfectly safe if you remain in the garden.”

“ Oh, I’ll see to that,” said the Q. C.

Thus assured, the trio set forth in a hired conveyance, Karava accompanying them part of the way.

Now, Karava Bey had an intense hatred for Zaras Pasha. The latter had twice, during the two years he had been in the Khedive’s service, prevented Karava’s promotion, because, as Zaras had informed his majesty, he was too friendly with the English.

Hence it was that Karava encouraged his friends to undertake the illicit visit against his better judgment, and for the secret gratification it gave him of knowing that the parasitical Pasha’s harem was being desecrated. So he smiled with fiendish satisfaction when he left the Englishmen.



## CHAPTER XII.

SIDNEY DINES WITH M. LE ZARAS.

AFTER his encounter with Lady Brattle, Sidney spent most of the night bitterly reflecting on the perversity of Fate. From his cradle never had the goddess of Destiny smiled on him ; before he could lisp his mother's name, she had been taken ; and then, while only a boarding-school lad of thirteen, Fate smote him again by depriving him of his father. It had been a hard blow, for though he had a brave heart it was none the less tender. "And now, again"—he said to himself—"when I had got into the habit of snapping my fingers at the cruel jade, she interposes an arrogant, prejudiced, worldly woman, between me and the only girl I can ever love." It had been a favourite saying of his father's, that "Opportunity does not always make great men ; the great man is self-made ; he seizes, and is equal to, the opportunity when it comes, or, by indomitable pluck, he makes it. It is the history of all great men from Hannibal to Napoleon ; some of them, like Cæsar, may have had a half-superstitious belief in destiny, but they never absolutely trusted the fickle jade ! Remember that, my boy, and always oppose Fate with energy."

Sidney thought of this now and decided to follow Sir Richard's advice and persevere with his suit ; for had not the sweetest girl in the world given him her



heart, without any feminine artifice or reserve? And had she not remained true to her promise, in spite of the temptations of wealth and a title?

Late in the afternoon, he was sitting on the terrace in front of the hotel, wondering how his case had progressed in chambers, for Sir Richard had not mentioned it on their morning's walk, when he received a note from Zaras Pasha, inviting him to dine at the Hotel Khedive that evening.

When he arrived at the hotel, Sidney found that the Pasha had ordered a sumptuous repast in a private room, because, as he explained, "I wish to have a long chat with you, and you might have a prejudice about my Eastern mode of living."

"Oh, no," replied Sidney, "I have no bigotry about religion, or social customs; I've travelled too much for that."

"Well, here we are, my young friend, so let us feast and be merry, for to-morrow we dine again; which ees an improvement on ze biblical phrase, ees it not zo?" his corpulent frame shaking like jelly, as he laughed.

"A more hopeful one, at any rate."

He regarded Sidney with his animated, benign smile, and asked as he poured the champagne:

"Now, how have you prospare— you have been promoted?"

"Yes, I'm now first lieutenant."

"Good! I wrote to your commander after zat leetle affair, on ze *Saluen*, when you save me from death and disgrace."

"Oh, pray, don't refer to that again, I was doing only my duty, and following orders."

"Ah, but eef you had been as careless about your



duty as I was about mine, I should have been done for, as you say in England."

They conversed for some time about naval matters, which led Sidney to tell him of his invention and how he had prospered with it, and his host congratulated him.

"Though you have prospared," said Le Zaras after a time, with a keen, critical scrutiny of the young man's face." You do not look happy—content."

"Oh, it's nothing—only the conventional, disgruntled habit of we English never to be satisfied with anything," said the young fellow evasively.

"Ah, no; no, no! You did not have zat look before—not even yesterday. It ees not ze liver. No! Your eye ees clear, and white as mountain snow. No!"

"Yes, my liver's all right."

"Ha!" exclaimed Le Zaras, after brief reflection. "I have guess ze cause. You aare in love! Ha, ha!"

Sidney coloured and endeavoured to look unconcerned, but his companion continued:

"Ha, it is something to be proud of, my young friend—if she is pretty."

"Oh, she's pretty enough—but I would rather not discuss her, if you will—will pardon my seeming churlishness, Monsieur Le Zaras." This was said with a sad attempt at a smile.

"Certainly, my friend, certainly. If it ees painful, we will change ze subject." Then, after a pause, he asked, "Where did you leave ze learned surgeon, Dolby?"

"With a friend of mine, Sir Richard Brattle."

Le Zaras was about to raise his glass to his lips, but calmly replaced it on the table at the mention of this name,



"What! the famous advocate of London?" he asked.

"The same, do you know him?"

"No,—but I have heard of him often. He is *your* friend?"

"Yes, staying at the Palace Hotel."

"And with him?" looking at his guest with suppressed excitement.

"His wife and niece."

"By the grave of Mahomet!"—Le Zaras always adapted his oaths to the country he was serving—"Zat is a surprise! Ha, ha, I see! Ze niece is your lady-love—is it not so?" he said, to mask his interest.

Sidney nodded assent and asked, "Do you know her?"

"Very well, very well. She is ze sweetest creature that breathes!"

It was now Sidney's turn to be surprised.

"I think there must be some mistake," he remarked, "it cannot be possible you know her."

"Ah, so you zink; but, her name is Elsie—she has a head and figure like Juno, soft brown, fawn-like eyes, and hair like—ah!—zare ees nothing to compare it with but ripe brown Indian corn. Ha, ha, is she not like zat?"

"You have described her exactly," cried the lover, now melting with his host's contagious enthusiasm.

"I admire your taste, my young friend, she is an angel! But she does not have you—is it so?"

"Ah, there you are—pray, excuse me—I can only say she has not repulsed me."

"Then it is, this Sir Richard refuses you——"

"No, he favours me."

"So, so. It is her—" he was about to say mother, but he checked himself, and continued, "her aunt."



"Yes."

"And why?"

"Because I am a sailor."

"Ah, she is a proud woman, eh?"

"Yes, very; and ambitious that her niece should make a better alliance."

"Then you have a rival?"

"Yes, a Lord Lashburn."

"And Elsie, she——"

"Despises him."

"Because she loves you. I zee! I zee! You are too modest, my young friend. Can you not get ze consent of ze aunt, by *some* means?"

"No, she has twice refused me. Only last night she insulted me grossly."

"Ze girl would marry you if you got ze aunt's consent?" asked Le Zaras eagerly.

"Yes, certainly."

"Then, you shall have eet, my young frien'."

"You shall have it!" repeated Sidney, with an incredulous smile.

"Yes," said Le Zaras, "I know ze girl's father, he——"

"Ah, pardon me, that's impossible, he died years ago."

"Ah, so they say in England," with a sardonic smile, "but he is now in Egypt. This proud Lady Brattle shall be made to accept you, my friend."

"Why, you astonish me!" exclaimed Sidney.

"I will astonish *her*—what I have say to you you must not tell to this innocent girl, it would distress her; but——"

Le Zaras stopped abruptly and puffed at his cigar reflectively for some seconds, and then continued;



“Yes, I will zee her father; you shall meet me here to-morrow, and I believe——” he paused again, and musingly watched the smoke ascending from his cigar. “Well, we shall zee, we shall zee what can be done!”

Sidney gazed at him with the same silent, incredulous look with which a rustic regards a conjurer for the first time.

“Ah, you have not faith in me?”

“Yes,” falteringly replied Sidney, “but——”

“You shall zee I can do you a zervice.”

They had finished the repast and the host rose and said:

“Now I must go. I have an appointment this evening with the Khedive. But to-morrow, after I zee Made-moiselle Elsie’s father, I will send ze young lady a letter in your care; you must be sure she gets it while alone. Her aunt must not know. Then ask for me here at zis time to-morrow.”

“I will do as you wish,” said Sidney frankly; “but you must excuse me if I appear a little sceptical; I’ve no faith in magicians, ancient or modern.”

“Ha! ha!” laughed the Pasha, slapping Sidney on the shoulder. “I *am* a magician, am I? I can bring ze dead to life, and”—with a fiendish smile—“ze arrogant to zare knees, and ze sweetheart to her lover. Ha! ha! ha!”

His voice had about the same volume as a Swiss horn; so that when he laughed, it was as if a trombone was imitating a cornet. They now descended the stairs, and the Pasha summoned his carriage. He gaily saluted Sidney, climbed into the conveyance, and drove away, leaving the young lieutenant filled with wonder and speculation, which furnished him with food for reflection well into the next day.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## NELLY AND LADY BRATTLE VISIT THE HAREM.

IT was after ten when the enterprising journalist and Lady Brattle drove up to the Villa Karava.

As Zeyneb opened the door for them Nelly cautiously whispered:

“Has the old Pasha gone?”

“Yees, and take Bateekah wif him.”

“Who’s Bateekah?”

“Zee—what you call in Anglish—ze *valet de maison*,” said the woman in a polyglot of her own.

“Valet? Oh, do you mean the butler?”

“Ze butler, zat ees him! he take always Bateekah when he stay all night.”

“Ah, good! then we may remain as long as we like, without fear of being disturbed?”

Zeyneb nodded, and led the way into the chief reception-room. As the visitors entered, they noted that its principal furniture consisted of low divans round three sides of the room, richly upholstered in orange-coloured silk damask, with here and there a tiny table of delicate French design, and three or four light fragile chairs of the same fashion. There were no windows, for the apartment was quite open to the long garden, which was reached by four white marble steps; and over the wall, at the end of the garden, could be seen, in the distance, the sparkling waters of the moonlit bay. A fountain was plashing just beneath



them as they stood looking out into the night, and a gentle breeze from the bay brought a faint odour of early flowers.

Zeyneb conversed in a polyglot of three languages, so that Miss Shy did not quite understand all she said.

"What room did you say this was?" asked Nelly.

"Ze Pasha receive ee's fren's here—ze reception-room."

"Most beautiful, eh?" turning to her friend.

"Charming, charming! What a lovely night!" cried Lady Brattle. "Why it's only February, and yet it's as warm as a July evening with us."

"What a delightful view! How luxuriantly those lovely palms, huge cactus, and tall sago trees, mingle together, as tangled and dense as in a tropical forest. I wish I had my Kodak—what a lovely picture this garden would make!"

"I notice, Miss Shy," said her friend, "that all the furniture which is not Egyptian is Parisian."

"Oh, yes, everything is French since they built the Suez Canal. All the best harems, I've heard, have French furniture; the wives demand the latest fashions. Eh, Zeyneb?"

The woman nodded assent.

"By the way," asked Lady Brattle, "where do they keep the children?"

Zeyneb grinned compassionately.

"Oh, they have none," said Nelly smiling, "that is another French fashion they've adopted."

The ladies walked about the room, examining and jotting down every detail in their note-books.

"Why, here are cigarettes and wine," observed Lady Brattle, tasting the wine. "It's not bad, rather sweet."



"And French novels," said Nelly, holding up "Nana," and two or three others of its class. "How many women has this Pasha?" asked Nelly, turning to Zeyneb.

"Ten; three here, and seven odalisques at Rosetta."

"Oh, the polygamous monster! Ten! Ten! Shocking!" cried her ladyship. "You see, Miss Shy, notwithstanding our boasted reforms in this country, our sex are still little better than human slaves. I believe any libertine may come here, and, by pretending to accept their religion, adopt their degrading customs."

"Do you?" rejoined Nelly. "I wonder if that's the reason why so many wealthy bachelors like to winter in Egypt."

"If so, it's a disgrace to civilization, and I'll expose it in the *Review*, as soon as I get home!" cried Lady Brattle.

Both ladies were so busy with their note-books, they did not notice that the Nubian, Abloo, had entered, and was angrily expostulating with Zeyneb in dumb show. When Lady Brattle presently looked up and beheld him, she exclaimed:

"Goodness gracious! Miss Shy, who is this?"

"Oh, that—that's Abloo," coolly replied Nelly.

"He no harm—he only our boy—he sleep when you come in," hastily and apologetically explained Zeyneb.

"That hideous negro, a boy!"

"How are you, Abloo?" said Nelly. "Been having a little nap, I see." Abloo only grunted. "What's the matter with the coon, Zeyneb? Why don't he speak?"

"He no talk, no lie, no hear; he deaf and dumb! Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Zeyneb.

"Wal, what's the good of him, then?"



“To attend ze ladies—Oh, he no harm—he like what you call in Anglish—ze—ze—ze——” Zeyneb puzzled her brain for an instant, and then joyfully cried: “Ah, it ees ze ox! ze ox! He no harm you.”

“Oh, I see!” exclaimed the American, a whimsical smile gradually spreading over her face. “Oh! Oh! That’s his species!” Then she whispered something to her friend and both ladies seemed to enjoy the joke, for they laughed immoderately.

“Wal, what does he want?” asked Nelly, when the two ladies had recovered from their hilariousness, while Zeyneb and Abloo were evidently quarrelling by the vigorous signs that were passing between them.

“He say he want haf ze money you give me.”

“Oh, that’s his game,” said Nelly, “backsheesh everywhere!”

“Oh, give him this,” cried Lady Brattle, offering Zeyneb a sovereign. “For goodness’ sake get rid of him!”

“Ah, zis will satisfy him. He have a secret bottle—he drink and sleep all ze time ze Pasha away. He go to sleep now.”

Abloo grinned amiably as he took the gold, and reeled out of the room; for he was already half tipsy.

“Great Snakes! What a crocodile grin! How I’d like to photograph that cavern of his. What a colour it would give to my article!” exclaimed Nelly.

“Oh, you will make it lurid enough!” rejoined her companion.

“Wal, I should snicker, if I don’t. Say, Zeney, we ain’t seen the ladies. Where are they?”

“In ze garden.”

“Ah, then we’d better interview them,” said Nelly, moving towards the steps.



"Oh, no, no, no!" objected Zeyneb, in alarm. "You cannot speak wis ze ladies. Zey would tell ze Pasha."

"Oh, I see. What a pity! Look here, Zeney, are these wives always strictly er—wal, you know, on the Q. T.?" winking knowingly at the Egyptian.

"I am not know Q. T.?"

"No secret love affairs, eh?"

"I am not know anyzing;" and the hag looked exceedingly shocked at such a suggestion.

"Oh, there must be," cried Lady Brattle, "I'm sure; I've read of them."

"Of course, of course, but she won't give it away. The wives know how to work her."

"Come zis way, ladies, and I will show you ze harem apartments upstairs," said Zeyneb.

"But can't we see the ladies?" insisted the American.

"Yes, from zat room," said Zeyneb, pointing to a balcony, in a wing of the villa. "Zey are in ze garden; but zare you can see zem, and here—for zey will come in soon."

They followed her upstairs, where Zeyneb led them into the harem proper. It was lined with mirrors, and beneath the windows, which looked on to the garden, were luxuriant couches, sofas, and easy-chairs, covered and cushioned with pale lemon-coloured silk, while the drapery of the windows was in neutral tints that varied from orange to lemon. All seemed in perfect harmony of colour, even to the rich thick rugs and carpet into which their feet sank as in a woodland bed of moss.

While Zeyneb was engaged with Lady Brattle, explaining the occupations and amusements of the denizens of the harem, Nelly stole along the passage which led



to the wing and balcony that overlooked the garden, and the reception-room which opened on to it. Nelly could hear voices talking in French, and through the foliage she could just discern the figures of three women. Two of them were walking with their arms clasping each other's waists; and the third, a tall, stately creature, with pure pale Greek features, and a languid manner, followed behind.

"I don't think they will come," said one of the two walking together.

"Oh, I do, Runa," said the other, "if he gets the note."

"But you can't be sure he got the note, Lisba," replied the petite one, called Runa. "Would he dare? Is he brave?"

"As brave as he is handsome. Heigho!" sighed the frail blonde, Lisba.

"What a gay old darling that was who clasped his heart with one hand, and blew me a kiss with the other."

"You can't really admire such an old man, Runa," said the languid one, joining the others.

Nelly, at the balcony above, was now all ears.

"I should make him think so, for the fun of the thing," replied Runa. "I would say no end of sweet and endearing things just to get him to make love to me," was the rejoinder with a ripple of laughter.

"Such an old man can't make love," observed the cold majestic one, who was called Ayros.

"Oh, can't he!" retorted Runa. "Far better than a young one. A few admiring glances, a tender, half shy pressure of his hand, and he will be quivering with delight, and pouring out a string of rapturous phrases.—Hush! I thought I heard the gate creak. Yes, I



did!" and the vivacious Runa dashed away down the garden and was lost to Nelly's view.

In less than a moment, the girl returned, and excitedly and breathlessly exclaimed:

"Yes, they have come! They have come! Three of them—one for each of us. How lucky we did not lock the gate. Let us go and welcome them." And then the three ladies disappeared in the shrubbery.

"Well, if this ain't a circus!" cried Nelly to herself, as she rushed off to acquaint Lady Brattle with what she had seen and heard.



## CHAPTER XIV.

LORD LASHBURN IS DETAINED AT THE VILLA  
KARAVA.

IN convivial gatherings, while under the influence of sparkling wine, many noble enterprises, many disastrous speculations, and many gigantic swindles have been conceived by, and financial support wheedled out of the light-headed diners, who have afterwards wondered at their imbecility. Under the same conditions, many a reckless and often disgraceful adventure has had its inception; for we all know that champagne has a treacherous habit of making us believe we are quite rational, when we are really mildly delirious. On such occasions—though we never frankly confess it to our wives—we men are like a pack of boys, playing “follow the leader,” and none of us like to show the white feather, particularly when the adventure tickles the fancy.

Our friends, Sir Richard, Mr. Dolby, and Lord Lashburn, under the influence of champagne, were now playing “follow the leader,” with the crafty Karava as their guide.

As we have seen, they had no sooner entered the ponderous portal of the garden, which startled them by the creaking of its rusty hinges, than they were met by the expectant ladies.

“Are you quite alone?” asked Dolby, in a low tone, of Lisba.



"Yes, quite, and dying for your company."

"But your attendants?" asked the Q. C.

"Oh, we've bribed them to keep out of the way. Abloo is in a tipsy sleep by this time," said Runa demurely, taking Sir Richard's arm, and looking up into his face with a smile of bewitching coyness.

Dolby introduced his friends to Lisba under the fictitious titles of Brattle Pasha, and Lashburn Effendi, and Lisba, in turn, presented Runa and Ayros. It was amusing to see Sir Richard and Lashburn attempting to remove their turbans as they saluted the ladies. After the formality of introduction, Dolby turned to Lisba and asked:

"Are you quite sure we shall not be disturbed?"

"Oh, quite, quite," was the reply. "And now you shall see how Egyptian ladies entertain their guests. We are delighted to see you, but, understand, everything is to be as perfectly decorous, you know, as an afternoon tea at Kensington."

"Certainly, certainly," assented Sir Richard; "I shall see to that. Oh, by the way, Lashburn Effendi," cried the Q. C. to his lordship, who was particularly attentive to Ayros, "have you locked the garden-door?"

"Yes," answered Lashburn.

"And have you got the key?"

"Yes; I took care of that."

"Don't lose it for the world."

The three ladies were attired in light-coloured modern gowns of soft, clinging fabrics which outlined the graceful proportions of their limbs, and merely veiled their swelling breasts; and yet they were far more enchanting and seductive thus attired than if nakedly exposing (as fashion decrees), what every true woman holds sacred to her spouse and her babe,



Dolby and Lisba now led the way towards the villa, Lashburn and Lisba following, while Sir Richard and Runa sauntered along slowly in the rear.

"Do you know," said the Q. C., tenderly pressing Runa's arm, "you are a delicious little darling?"

"Of course, I know," rejoined Runa, "but it's nicer to feel that you know it," with a shy glance from beneath her long brown lashes, that thrilled the gay old dandy.

"Ha, ha! yes, I should indeed be *blasé* not to feel your charm at once."

"I like you—your admiration is so—frank."

"Ha, ha, ha! you jolly little punster!"

"Oh, I do, I do. You're so responsive."

"Am I?" asked the already bewitched Q. C., taking her hand and attempting to kiss it.

"Oh, don't do that!" quickly withdrawing her hand.

"Why not?" he asked, astonished at the abrupt change in her manner.

"Oh, our admirers don't do that," was the rejoinder, with well-feigned seriousness.

"No? I meant no offence, my dear, no offence whatever."

"But it is an offence—a kiss is wasted—*there*." Her dark red lips poutingly turned up to his face.

"There? Ah, ah! I see! I see!" and he attempted to kiss Runa's coquettish lips, but, with a quick movement of her head, she adroitly evaded him, but said with a smack of her lips,

"Ah, that is much better."

"But I didn't kiss you."

"Yet you might have done—if you had been quicker," said Runa, playfully patting his cheek.



"God bless me, what delicious candour!" he cried, half to himself.

"You kiss as daintily as a bee kisses the posy," she observed, hugging his arm.

"Oh, I've gathered honey before," he replied, with a wicked leer.

"I knew you had, you dear old rogue," retorted Runa admiringly.

"But never in Egyptian clover."

They had now come up with the others. Dolby and Lisba were conversing together, seated in modern wicker chairs, provided with luxurious silk cushions. Lashburn and his dark-haired companion each appropriated one of these, and Sir Richard and Runa followed their example. A light bamboo-table stood near, and on it were dainty biscuits, bon-bons, light wine, and cigarettes.

After they had all been animatedly conversing for some time, each interested in his own special companion, and the visitors had partaken of wine and biscuits, Lisba exclaimed: "Oh, perhaps you would like to smoke!"

"Of course they would," cried Runa. "Let us get each of them a nargeeleh."

"What is a nargeeleh?" asked Sir Richard.

"Oh, an Oriental pipe," replied Dolby.

"Then, let's have one, by all means," said the Q. C. "Let us do the thing properly while we are about it."

"Come, Ayros," said Runa, "help me to find the pipes, and, Lisba, dear, you might see if you could find some champagne—for I am sure gentlemen don't care for this sweet wine."

"It is rather—er—sickly," remarked Lashburn.



"Oh, then we'll get some," said Lisba. And with this the two ladies disappeared up the steps into the villa.

"I say," observed Lashburn, when they had gone, "this is rather dangerous, you know. Is it a plant?"

"Pooh, pooh, not at all," answered the Q. C. "We need not stay long; just a brief chat, and then off, eh, Dolby?"

"We certainly seem to have been expected," assented the surgeon.

"Of course; look at our reception!"

"But is it genuine?" asked the embryo diplomat, nervously twisting his moustache.

"As the sun—and as warm, by Jove!" answered the Q. C.

"It's not a snare?" persisted the timorous Lashburn.

"Bless you, no! We're as welcome as whisky at a wake! I say, Dolby, how coolly you take it." Then looking about him at the delightful surroundings, he rapturously exclaimed: "By the sons of Ptolemy, this is an adventure! Among the houris! How charmingly hospitable they are! Karava Bey told me they were all ravenous flirts, and would risk their necks for a novelty. And, by Jove! they would. That little red-haired gypsy squeezed my hand just now as if I were twenty—and, egad, I felt twenty. I say, Lashburn, how do you find your—er—er—what's her name? the dark-eyed goddess?"

"Ayros? Oh, majestic as a Roman empress; rather cold, uncertain and capricious, but—charming, charming!"

"And you, Dolby, how do you find the fragile blonde?"



"Lisba? Clinging and docile as a fawn," said Dolby, impassively.

"And you, Sir Richard, your Runa, eh?" asked Lashburn banteringly.

"Runa! Heigho! My eloquence is inadequate. The—well, she has the *chic* of a Parisian grisette, the—her eyes have the seductive candour of a Bond-Street milliner, and the piquancy of a Yankee *debutante*, all blending as harmoniously as the hues of a rainbow."

A peal of laughter greeted this sally.

"Haw, haw! Ye-as, ye-as. I thought you were smitten," said Lashburn, leering at the Q. C. through his single glass.

"Bitten, my boy, *bitten*. Why, I feel as delirious as a lad after his first kiss. But here they come! Hush!"

The three wives now returned, Lisba bringing the wine, and Ayros and Runa the three narghiles. Lisba placed the wine on the table, and while Dolby loosened the corks, Runa and Ayros presented their respective admirers with the stems of the pipes. When the foaming champagne had been passed around, and each of the intruders was lazily lolling in his easy-chair, puffing away as if to the custom born, Runa nestled up to Sir Richard and taking the cigarette from between her gleaming teeth, said:

"You see we delight in making you cosy and at home."

"You do, Runa, you do. By the way, yours is a charming name."

"Runa! Do you like it?"

"Yes, and the owner immensely," added the gallant old Q. C., looking down into her eyes with killing devotion.



“Ah, you are my Pasha,” she said, patting his chin. “Yes! You are as sweet as Mahomet.”

The Q. C. had languidly closed his eyes, and for the moment had forgotten where he was. “I am, my dear, I am!” he cried with a start. “But I never knew it before.” Then to himself he said: “Oh, if Betsy could only see how I am appreciated!”

At that very moment his wife was on the balcony above, looking down at them; for Nelly Shy had hastened to her and excitedly whispered: “You leave Zeney to me, go along to that balcony and you’ll see a circus.”

“A circus! What is a circus doing here?” asked her ladyship innocently.

“Wal, you go, and you’ll see!”

Then as Lady Brattle hastened away, Nelly turned to Zeyneb and said: “Why, Zeyneb, I’d no idea you had such a remarkable view from that balcony; it’s simply enchanting. You must let me sketch it.”

“Oh, it ees very nice,” replied the menial, ignorant of Nelly’s irony.

“Why, it’s a paradise, a paradise by moonlight! Now what have you been explaining to—to my friend while I’ve been gone.”

Thus was it she artfully kept Zeyneb busy while her friend looked on at the “circus.”

Now Lady Brattle was so near-sighted that she could never distinguish the face of one person from another across the street; consequently she did not recognize her evergreen spouse, now playing the Pasha in the gardens below.

“Well, well,” she said to herself, “it’s simply beyond belief! No wonder she called it a circus!” Her ladyship continued to gaze on the scene as if spell-



bound. Lashburn was conversing with Ayros in ceremonious politeness.

"Isn't that girl," indicating Runa, "rather—er—lively?" he asked.

"Yes," said his companion scornfully, "she is a Ghawazee. A—well, you call them gypsies in England—her mother was a Cairo street-dancer, and her father,—Humph! the Prophet only knows."

"Do you know," said Lashburn, deliberately placing in his eye his single glass, "your imperious beauty reminds me of the paintings of Cleopatra."

"Yes," said Ayros, calmly accepting the flattery. "I have often been told that I excel her in regal beauty."

"There's no doubt of it, no doubt of it," said the son of Mulvaney, as enthusiastically as he was capable of.

"My figure is more of the classical Greek type, I think, don't you?" she asked, rising languidly and standing in engaging statuesque attitude.

"True, true," was the response, as Lashburn regarded the beautiful creature with the eye of a connoisseur, and thinking to himself what excellent taste the old Pasha had.

Ayros moved away, as if inclined for a walk, so Lashburn naturally followed her.

Meanwhile, Sir Richard was so completely engrossed with Runa that he did not notice Lashburn's absence; while Lisba, in a subdued undertone, had been relating to Dolby her career from the time she deserted the Admiral, adding that at Vienna she had broken her ankle, and from that time had been unable to dance.

She went on to relate how the Count had ill-treated



her; how she had drifted to Constantinople, where she met Zaras Pasha who had offered her marriage. "Oh, I was a fool to leave the Admiral; the dear old boy was very nice," she sighed in conclusion.

Dolby sympathized with her truly pathetic recital. He was one of those suave handsome men, whom *young* ladies believed to be nice and good; and whom *middle-aged* women intuitively knew to be refined and discreet; so he was universally trusted and admired by the gentle sex. All at once Sir Richard discovered the absence of Lashburn and Ayros.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, jumping up and glancing about the garden. "I can't allow this. Where's that beggar, Lashburn? Excuse me, Runa, I must keep my eye upon him."

So off he dashed, to find the missing diplomat, leaving Runa wondering what had come over him. Presently he returned, dragging Lashburn by the arm, and, shaking his forefinger at the culprit, protested:

"No, no, no, my boy, that won't do."

"What won't do?" was the retort with an injured look.

"Ah, you sly young rogue!"

"What do you mean?"

"We agreed to keep together. Now, didn't we?"

"Yes, but I'm only going——"

"Oh, I know, I know; but I wouldn't if I were you," winking at Lashburn.

By this time Dolby and Lisba were strolling off in the opposite direction. Seeing them, the Q. C. impatiently cried: "Hist! Hist!" but Dolby, paying no heed to the call, Sir Richard immediately shot after him, exclaiming:

"Well, upon my word! Now *he's* off!"



"What ails the little man?" asked Runa, joining Lashburn and Ayros.

"Oh, he's too confoundedly particular," answered Lashburn irritably.

"He doesn't *look* like a particular man, does he?" asked Runa with an arch glance.

Sir Richard was now dragging Dolby by his Pasha's gown back to his chair.

"Ha, ha!" he chuckled, "you're a sly dog, you are. Ha, ha! ho, ho! But it won't do."

"What do you mean, sir, what do you mean," growled Dolby with burlesque ferocity. "We were only discussing the influence of the moon."

"But I can't allow it, my boy," with a nudge in the ribs, "under the circumstances."

"Oh come, come now, circumstances alter cases."

"Ha, yes, yes! Ha, ha! but they never alter an *old case* like you, Dolby. Ha, ha, ha!"

"How dare you, sir; insinuate——" continued Dolby, in mock heroics.

"Come, come, we'll have no more mooning," broke in the Q. C., seriously. "I've made myself responsible for the perfect propriety of this visit. Haven't I, my dear?" appealing to Lisba, who was clinging lovingly to Dolby's arm.

Lisba smiled sweetly and nodded.

"You! Pooh! pooh! It's ridiculous!" exclaimed Dolby.

Then Sir Richard whispered to the surgeon:

"Beware! beware! United we stand, divided we fall. Egad, *I shall*, if you don't stand by me. She'd seduce a bishop," nodding at Runa.

Dolby laughed heartily at this, and observed to Lisba,



“ Oh, he’s been a regular Don Juan in his time, and yet he’s afraid to be left alone.”

They now all seated themselves again, and Runa renewed her attentions to the impressionable Q. C.

Lady Brattle, at the balcony above, looked on at all this with increasing amazement. Owing to her imperfect vision she could not discern the Q. C.’s features at that distance, or clearly catch the tones of his voice; yet there was something, she reflected, in the alert, volatile manner of the little Pasha below that reminded her of her husband; but she put the thought away from her as an utter impossibility. Nelly Shy came and joined her for an instant, then observed:

“ Isn’t this a circus? Life in the harem!”

“ Oh, it’s monstrous! We’ll expose it. What creatures! What a life!” cried her ladyship, in righteous indignation.

“ Aren’t you glad you came?”

“ I wouldn’t have missed it for a peerage!”

“ Won’t I make an article of this! Listen!”

“ Oh, let us go into the reception-room,” said Lisba, “ and Runa will dance for us. Won’t you, Runa?”

“ Yes, come along,” acquiesced Runa, grasping Sir Richard’s arm. And so they all trooped up the steps into the room which looked onto the garden. The wine and chairs were brought in; then Runa, indicating the divan at the centre of the room, said to the Q. C., “ You shall be my Pasha, and have the place of honour, and the others shall be guests looking on.”

Sir Richard climbed on to the luxurious divan, crossed his legs, Eastern fashion, drew his gown about him and inquired: “ How will this do?”

“ Very well, indeed, capital!” cried Dolby, laughing at the figure he presented.



"I think I need a nargeeleh to make a perfect picture, eh?"

"Yes, yes," said Runa, and quickly she brought the coil of pipe.

"Now let the revel begin," said the throned advocate facetiously. "Oh, by the way, Dolby, is my turban on straight?"

"Oh, yes, it will do, it will do."

"You must first drink my health," said Runa, pouring out a bumper for her admirer, and Lisba did the same for Dolby and Lashburn; but the proud Ayros, though she exacted homage, gave none.

"Now then, gentlemen," cried Sir Richard, holding up his glass, "to the health of Runa, the little fairy."

The toast was drunk and Runa left the room. In a few minutes she returned with a complete change of attire; her kid slippers were replaced with soft felt shoes; she had donned a fleecy veil, through which the plump outlines of her supple and shapely limbs were faintly visible.

"Does she dance well?" Lashburn asked his companion.

"I don't think so. She postures and kicks too much for me; yet some men are so weak that a girl's vulgar antics enrapture them more than a modest kiss." This was uttered with a haughty glance and a sneer at her supple rival. There was no music (except in Runa's imagination), as she began modestly, silently, gliding here and there on the soft carpet; at first contenting herself with graceful figures, until, little by little, her Arabian blood glowed in her cheeks and flashed from her dusky eyes; then she abandoned herself to the wild delirium of the dance.

Gradually her fluttering feet and sensuous limbs be-



came more and more fascinating and irresistible to the eye ; she swayed to and fro in the most bewitching postures ; swirling and circling until her legs and arms appeared to be in hopeless tangle with her gauzy drapery ; but the fleecy fabric always unwound from her figure as if by magic, while she balanced herself for a moment on one toe. Then, with barely an instant to gain her breath, she whirled away again ; far madder, wilder, and more audacious than she had previously done, nodding her saucy head at one and another, her face half-hidden in her fluffy curls, flashing her drapery in their faces, and then suddenly darting off in another direction, throwing her hips to the right and left in reckless, sensuous abandon, as if her body were all sinews.

At length, when finally spent, with a faint ecstatic cry, she threw herself on the divan beside Sir Richard, her head on his knee, her glistening merry eyes looking up into his, her breast rising and swelling, as she lay panting and gasping for breath.

“ Bravo ! bravo ! ” they all enthusiastically applauded, with the exception of Ayros, who looked on with undisguised disdain.

When Runa had sufficiently recovered to speak, she nestled up to Sir Richard’s breast, and asked :

“ Did it please you, my sweet Pasha ? ”

“ It was divine, my dear, simply divine ! ” patting her burning cheeks.

At this point Ayros led Lashburn from the room, saying, “ Come, I cannot endure her. She is positively vulgar. In this ante-room we shall have a fine view of the bay by moonlight. ” So they stole away.

When Runa had nearly recovered her breath, and while her breast was still heaving against the Q.C’s shoulder, she asked :



"Can you dance, my gay Pasha?"

"Oh, can't I? You should see me."

"But not the Egyptian style."

"No, no. But in my time, I've done the light fantastic with the volatile French, the seductive Italian, and the voluptuous Viennese. I only require your ethereal Egyptian to complete my happiness. Will you teach me, my dear?"

"Yes. Come on!" cried Runa, bounding on to the carpet. "Just watch me first," and off she glided again, swaying and swirling as light as a bird, and with the grace of a fawn.

What with the wine, and the blandishments of the fascinating creature before him, the Q. C. could no longer restrain himself. His blood was aflame.

Runa held out her arms.

He dashed his turban to the floor, revealing his bald head, and, clasping Runa in his arms, capered about the room with her in a mad, reckless whirl.

Lisba and Dolby clapped their hands, and encouraged them.

Lady Brattle, when her spouse threw off his turban, and exposed his shining cranium, completely lost control of herself and screamed:

"Oh, the reprobate! The reprobate! It's Dick! It's Dick!" and rushed away along the passage crying: "Oh, I'll teach that hussy a lesson in dancing."

Sir Richard, hearing the well-known voice, suddenly stopped, listened, and asked, "What was that? I could swear I heard the voice of Betsy! Ha, ha," he added, with a sickly smile, "it was only my accusing conscience."

After a pause he drew off his Pasha's gown, and



was preparing for another dance, when they were all startled by a loud, blustering voice in the hall.

Runa and Lisba turned pale.

"Great Jupiter! What is that?" asked Sir Richard in alarm.

"Bateekah, and the Pasha! They have returned! Go, go!" urged Runa wildly.

"Returned! Great God!" exclaimed Dolby and the Q. C. at once, in utter consternation.

"Run for your lives!" cried Lisba, hurrying away to a door on the left.

The two intruders required no more urging; they dashed down the garden as if the old boy was after them.

Reaching the garden door they found it locked, for of course Lashburn, who was spooning in the ante-room, had the key secure in his pocket. They damned Lashburn for a dolt.

What was to be done?

They heard the Pasha's sonorous voice demanding of the frightened Zeyneb, "Where are my wives? Where is Abloo? Look in the garden, Bateekah."

Sir Richard and Dolby were rushing excitedly about in search of some means to scale the twelve-foot wall.

They heard Bateekah coming down the gravel walk.

Sir Richard's knees were knocking together like a pair of cymbals. All at once, Dolby discovered a ladder, which the old gardener had left near by. Up this they scrambled and, reaching the top in safety, jumped down to the soft sand below, and dashed off to the hotel as fast as frenzy would carry them.

Meantime, Nelly and Lady Brattle had lost their way in the rooms above, but finally found the staircase. Then her ladyship, frantic with rage at her in-



constant spouse, rushed into the reception-room, followed by Nelly. Zeyneb was just telling the Pasha he had lady visitors, when Lady Brattle burst into the room, and was confronted with Le Zaras.

"Gracious Heavens!" exclaimed her ladyship, recoiling. "My first husband!"

"Your what?" cried Nelly, incredulously.

The Pasha was as much surprised as she was, but quickly taking in the situation, said with a calm, sarcastic smile: "I am please to zee you, ladies. You are welcome. You wish to spend ze night in ze harem? Eh, ees it not zo?"

"Thanks," said Nelly, "that's just what I'm hankering after."

"No, no, no," protested the frenzied wife.

"You prefer a chamber togazer?" he continued, ignoring his former wife. "It shall be zo. Zeyneb, show ze ladies to a chamber."

As the menial was about to obey him, he called her aside, and hissed in her ear, "If you let them escape, I'll strangle you!" With this, he waved them away, giving his quaking wife a triumphant look, which caused her to reel and grasp Nelly's arm for support as they left the room.

By this time, the major-domo, Bateekah, had returned.

"See who is in the ante-room," said the Pasha; "I hear some one talking with Ayros."

Bateekah did as he was ordered, and immediately returned, dragging Lord Lashburn by the ear, and Ayros following, looking haughty, rebellious, and defiant.

"By the beard of the Prophet!" roared the Pasha, when he beheld the trembling culprit. "Do you



know the consequences of being caught alone with my wife?"

"I—I—can't say I do. Sir, I assure you——"

"Hound! To-morrow you die!" thundered Le Zaras.

Lashburn's legs refused to support him; he sank on the carpet a craven, paralyzed heap, for all Karava had said rushed into his mind.



## CHAPTER XV.

## ELSIE GETS A LETTER FROM HER FATHER.

How came Zaras Pasha to return to his harem so unexpectedly? Like all sensual men, he was exceedingly jealous of his women. Something in her manner, and in the tone of Lisba's voice, when she asked him that evening if he would return late, and the way she had chided him for leaving them so often alone, had roused his suspicions. So, consulting his major-domo, Bateekah, who he found shared his views of the matter, he decided to excuse himself to his master at the earliest moment, and surprise his family; as we have seen, he did.

But let us return for a little to Dane and his doings. Sidney spent a day of expectation waiting for the promised letter to Elsie. He had seen her two or three times that day, and she seemed greatly perplexed at the prolonged absence of Nelly and Lady Brattle; for of course they had not returned.

"I suspect," she said, "Miss Shy has taken her to see some out-of-the-way sight, which has taken longer than they calculated, and, as they could not get back till late, they have decided to stay the night."

"But didn't your aunt tell you where she was going?" asked Sidney.

"No only that it was a rare sight and they would not return till late."

Elsie did not see her Uncle Dick until midday, when



he came limping along the hotel verandah; for, in jumping from the wall of the Pasha's garden to the sand the night before he had injured his knee.

"Why, Uncle Dick!" she exclaimed, as he appeared, "what is the matter? You are lame."

"Oh, it's nothing, my dear. It's nothing," replied the Q. C., unconsciously looking as penitent as a brow-beaten collie.

"But you wince at every stride," persisted the girl. "How did it happen?"

"Eh? Oh, well, you see—er—it was all through that dare-devil, Dolby. We were returning leisurely home last night along the beach—and we came to a ditch and Dolby dared me to jump it with him. Well, I was foolish enough to attempt it, and so landed in the ditch and injured my knee. I ought to have known better than to undertake such a reckless feat at my age."

"I should think so. But I'm so sorry. Are you sure it is not seriously injured?" asked Elsie sympathetically.

"Oh, no. Dolby examined it, and says it will be all right in a day or two. By the way, my dear, where is your aunt?"

"Oh, neither she nor Miss Shy have yet returned."

Sir Richard offered up a silent prayer to Heaven for a mercy which he did not deserve; for he had purposely absented himself from the breakfast-table that he might not encounter the searching gaze of his exacting spouse. His accusing conscience told him he could not look her in the face without betraying himself. Now, when he learned she had been out all night, his spirits rose. If there was to be any upbraiding, he was going to do it; he was to be the injured



party. He knew he looked seedy, for his face was pale, his head ached, and his eyes were slightly swollen, and all day he kept saying to himself: "It's no use, Dick, you can't stand the larks you used to do. You're getting old."

Early in the afternoon Bateekah brought Sidney the expected letter, and in it there was one for Elsie.

The latter just then happened to be in her room, so Sidney, knocking at her door, said, as she opened it:

"Excuse me for troubling you, but I am requested to give you this at once." Then, after she had thanked him, he hastened away to peruse his own letter. Though brief it greatly interested him.

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND:

"I have gained the consent of Elsie's father to your marriage with his daughter, and hope to bring you Lady Brattle's consent when we meet. You shall find me at the Hotel Khedive at three o'clock. With my warmest regards

"Cordially yours,

"ZARAS PASHA."

"Lady Brattle's consent," mused Sidney; "there is something more in this than I can fathom. What power has he over her father and Lady Brattle too?"

If Dane was surprised at *his* letter, Elsie was simply astounded at hers. It was also brief, and ran as follows:

"MY DEAR CHILD:

"I only learned last night you were in Alexandria. I am impatient to see you again. I will send you a carriage to bring you to the Hotel Khedive at two



o'clock. Do not be alarmed about your mother, she is with me. Ask at the hotel for Zaras Pasha ; that is my rank in Egypt.

“ Your devoted father,

“ VICTOR LE ZARAS.

Elsie dropped the letter, and sank into a chair dumb-founded. Her father in Alexandria ! And her mother visiting him ! “ I must be dreaming,” she cried, then took up the letter and read it again. “ Do not be alarmed about your mother, *she is with me.*” Yes, there it was, there was no mistake about it. For some moments she sat and pondered. All at once she remembered that her mother and Sir Richard had seriously quarrelled the night before, and had hardly spoken since. Had her mother, in a fit of anger, returned to her father ? She considered the matter in every light and was hugely puzzled ; yet that was the only explanation she could find for her mother’s seemingly unaccountable conduct.

While she was still pondering the matter, an attendant came to announce that a carriage was waiting for her at the door.

Elsie glanced at her watch. Yes, it was nearly two o'clock. She hastily put on her things, descended the stairs, entered the carriage, and was driven off to the Hotel Khedive.

There, in a private suite of rooms, she met her father, and, sure enough, in the garb of a Pasha. After an effusive but affectionate welcome, she asked :

“ But where is mamma ? ”

“ At ze Villa Karava.”

“ Your villa ? ”

“ Yes,”



"Alone?"

"Oh, no. Zare is with her an American."

"Nellie Shy?"

"Yes."

"Did—er—mamma come of her own free will?" anxiously asked the girl.

"Yes, oh, yes!" rejoined the Pasha, with an amused smile.

"Well, I—I cannot understand it. Pray how did you come to know that I was at the Palace Hotel?"

"From your lover, *ma chere*."

"My lover?" Elsie blushed, for her father was watching her closely.

"Lieutenant Dane. You do love him, *mon enfant*, do you not? Ah, I know ze tell-tale blush. You do love him, *ma chere*?" he continued, tenderly.

"Yes, papa, I do—and he loves me," she admitted with natural modesty.

"Zat I know—and you shall marry him, *mon enfant*."

"But how came you to know Sidney?"

He briefly told her how he had first met young Dane. "You shall marry him; for of all ze men in ze world he is ze one I would select for you."

"But mamma will not consent."

"Not yet, but she will," replied the Pasha, with such a dark frown as his child had never seen on his olive face before. "Zat does not matter," he continued, "your father consents; zat ees enough."

"Does he know that you are my father?" Elsie asked with some misgiving.

"No, zat ees not necessary. I—I have——" The Pasha's voice here broke, and tears were in his voice and precious near his eyes. "I have not been a



father to be proud of—I——” The old profligate had a tender heart, and if he ever felt remorse of an ill-spent life he felt it now. “I am ashamed of your father, if you are not.” He looked at his child wistfully.

“No, no, father,” cried Elsie, with a swelling heart, “I am not ashamed to own you; you are my father, that is——”

He clasped her in his arms with a fierce paternal embrace before she could complete the sentence. And when he released her, there were glistening tears in both their eyes.

Before they had fairly recovered, Sidney was announced, and duly shown into the apartment.

He was greatly surprised to find Elsie in the Pasha’s company, and looked from one to the other questioningly.

The Pasha gave him little time for reflection. “Zis ees ze lady, you tell me of?” he asked.

“Yes,” replied Sidney, still speculating on their relations.

“And you love her?”

“Yes—but, I don’t understand——”

“Never mind. I have kept my promise. I have seen her father. I have gain his consent, as I wrote you. Now there is nothing in the way. You can marry her, eh?” The erst commodore’s face was radiant with enjoyment at the young lieutenant’s puzzled countenance.

“I am bewildered! I—I——” wonder choked his utterance. “It seems as if a benefactor had suddenly dropped from the clouds. What does it all mean, Elsie?”

“Oh, Sidney! Sidney!” burst forth the girl. “I cannot allow you to be deceived, though I have un-



willingly kept a secret from you. Lady Brattle is my mother, and this gentleman is my father."

Le Zaras gravely bowed in confirmation and said: "Yes, ze unworthy father of zis sweet girl."

If Sidney was puzzled before, he was now simply dumfounded; he could frame no reply; what could a man say, he thought to himself when a family secret was thus suddenly sprung upon him, and by the one most concerned.

It was an awkward moment for all three; Le Zaras went and looked out of the window to conceal his emotion.

"I kept the secret for my mother's sake," continued Elsie; "not because I was ashamed of the separation between my parents, or because I feared that you would waver in your constancy if you knew the—the——" she broke off, puzzled to find a suitable word to delicately express her meaning.

The Pasha promptly supplied it. "Zee truth about her profligate father. She is brave, zis child of mine. Ah! I feel unworthy of her loyal devotion."

"And I am proud of the faith she places in me," said Sidney ardently. "Whatever may have been the cause of your divorce, Monsieur Le Zaras, it can have no effect upon my attachment for Elsie. She has proved as loyal to me as she has to you, in spite of the insidious advice of Lady Brattle and the temptation of a wealthy admirer with a noble title."

"Ah, Sidney," cried the girl, clasping his hand shyly, "you give me too much credit. If one is not covetous one cannot be tempted. I saw nothing to covet in his lordship or his title——"

"You mean zat Lashburn?" asked her father, turning to Sidney,



Sidney assented.

“Ah, he is out of ze race. Ha, ha, ha! And I will keep him out,” with a sardonic smile.

“Now tell me about mamma,” said Elsie; “why did she come to you?”

“Zat I must find out from her husband—hem. Yes, we will say her husband for ze time being. Sir Richard Brattle, was he at ze hotel when you came here?” he asked of Sidney, evading the girl’s anxious look.

“Yes, he’s not feeling well to-day.”

“Ah, zat is good! I have some business with him. I wish very much to consult ze great advocate,” continued the Pasha, with a smile and chuckle that disturbed his daughter. Elsie felt instinctively he was concealing something from her.

As they together left the hotel, Le Zaras turned to Sidney and said:

“I need not ask you to escort your *fiancée* back to ze hotel—you will do so with every care? Or better—take her for a little drive—you have her father’s consent. Ha, ha, ha! and he shook all over with that jovial laugh of his. “And zat will give me time for consulting ze great Q. C. Adieu, *mon ami*. Adieu, *ma chère*.” Then kissing the girl tenderly, he climbed into his carriage and was driven off.

The spectacle of the great fat, black-bearded Pasha kissing the bright, golden-haired English girl, astonished the guests who happened to be loitering in front of the Hotel Khedive, and naturally filled them with speculation as to their relations.

Sidney quickly summoned a carriage, and the happy pair set out for a drive. They were only too glad of the opportunity, for they had much to talk about; still Elsie was troubled as to the conduct of her mother.



## CHAPTER XVI.

## ZARAS PASHA CALLS UPON SIR RICHARD.

SIR RICHARD was reclining on a couch in his room at the hotel, with an open novel before him, for his injured knee was rather painful. Though he was reading, he could not have told what the story was about ; for his mind was constantly recurring to the events of the night before, and his miraculous escape. While he was thus musing and speculating on what had happened to poor Lashburn, and wondering why Karava Bey had not called, the chamberlain of the hotel came to tell him there was a gentleman below who wished to speak with him.

"He did not give his name, sir," said the functionary, "but said he was an old friend of yours."

"A native?" enquired the Q. C.

"Yes, Sir Richard, he seems to know you."

"Oh, ask him to come up." It will be Karava he thought to himself. But, instead of Karava, the ponderous figure of Zaras Pasha came puffing into the room. The two men had never met before, and Sir Richard had not the slightest idea this was his predecessor. He saw at once, by his costume, that he was a Pasha, and he felt a sudden quaking at his heart lest he might be *the* Pasha whose wife he had danced with the night before, who had come to demand satisfaction for the outrage.

"I beg your pardon," he observed with a husky, fal-



tering voice, "there must be some mistake. I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance—I—I think?"

"No," said the Pasha, "but *I know you.*" This was said with a sonorous voice and a sardonic smile which filled the Q. C. with dread, for he said to himself: "It must be he; and, egad, he's found me out." However, he summoned up courage to say with an effort at indifference, "I'm sorry I cannot reciprocate the—er—pleasure."

"You will presently."

This reply was more portentous to the guilty listener than ever. As a matter of fact, Le Zaras had not the least notion that the man before him was one of the marauders of the previous evening; for, though Bateekah had found the turban and gown the Q. C. had left behind him, yet, as chance would have it, one of the pockets contained Karava's visiting card; so the Pasha had at once jumped to the conclusion that Karava was the real offender.

"I know you," continued the Pasha, "for your reputation as an advocate is as wide as ze world." He paused. "Shall we sit?" he asked.

"Certainly, certainly," assented the advocate, indicating a chair, and glad of the hint, for he was by no means at ease on his legs.

"I wish to consult you, Sir Richard, on a very delicate point of law." This he said, drawing up his chair and facing the advocate.

"Pardon me," said the Q. C., "I did not catch your name?" This was said evasively, yet determinedly, to set his tortured mind at rest as to the identity of his visitor.

"I am Commodore Zaras Pasha, in ze service of his Majesty ze Khedive."



His listener turned a shade paler and bowed; he could not trust himself to speak; for here he was face to face with the very man he had wronged. "What diabolical purpose had the ponderous Mohammedan in seeking him alone?" he mused to himself.

"I live at ze Villa Karava."

"He's coming to the point at last," thought the Q. C. "Now I'm in for it."

"You know ze place, eh?"

The learned counsel nodded again, for his tongue was now dry as a ball of cotton, and as useless for articulation.

"You have not been zare?"

"I've passed it," ventured his listener, determined not to commit himself.

"Well, it is on ze Remlah Road. Now a lady came to me zare last night and joined my harem of her own will. Many years ago—it ees twenty I zink—I marry her in ze East. She left me and went to England and obtained a divorce."

"Now, what's he driving at?" thought the Q. C. "What has the lady to do with my reckless escapade of last night?"

"You do not listen?" said the Pasha, noting his abstraction.

"Yes, yes," said the other with a start. "Oh, I'm following you, I'm following you."

"Now, zis ees ze point," said the Pasha, leaning forward and emphasizing his speech with his plump forefinger, and a fiendish smile on his rotund visage, "does ze divorce obtain in England hold good, when ze wife leaves her present husband and freely returns to me here in Egypt. Can he claim her? Is she not my Egyptian wife——"



The now relieved Q. C. reflected a moment and then answered: "The English courts have no jurisdiction in Egypt. But where were you married?"

"In Calcutta."

"Was she a British subject?"

"Yes."

"And you——?"

"I—I am not a British subject."

"On what grounds was the divorce obtained?"

"Cruelty and desertion—I have hear."

"Hum! Were there any children?"

"One."

"The court gave her the custody of the child of course?"

"I have just learn ze child was not mention to ze court."

"Not mentioned! Absurd. What was her counsel thinking of?"

"Ze lady was zen young and attractive. She did not care to have ze world know of her child. She deceive ze man she wished to marry, and ze court too."

"Then the husband would be entitled to the custody of the child."

"Are you quite sure?" eagerly asked the Pasha, the whites of his great black eyes dilating.

"Quite. And if you are a citizen of France, it is a debatable point whether the English court could grant a legal divorce. Consequently her second marriage may be illegal—bigamous."

"Ha, ha, ha!" suddenly burst forth the Pasha. "Zat is good! It was illegal—it is bigamous! Ha, ha, ha! You are a keen counsellor. A wise advocate!" bringing his ponderous hand down on Sir Richard's injured knee in a way that made him groan inwardly.



The Q. C. thought his unwelcome guest had suddenly lost his reason, he seemed so absurdly hilarious about a trifling point of law.

"I shall pay your fee with ze greatest pleasure," continued Le Zaras, "for you have discover a flaw I never zink of."

Ha, ha, ha! it is bigamous if I am a citizen of France," and he roared again. "Zat is great satisfaction to me."

Sir Richard had by this time come to the conclusion that, by some miraculous chance, the Pasha was *not* aware of his doings the night previous; so his spirits rose accordingly.

"I may snap my fingers at ze decree—is it so?"

"Yes. Her counsel must have been an imbecile not to have cautioned her on that point."

"Ha, ha, ha! He was an imbecile, for he wanted to marry her."

"And did he?"

"Yes, and now she come back to me. You zee ze point?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the advocate, "that's a rare joke. What fools we men are when we become infatuated with a pretty woman."

"We are! We are! Ha, ha, ha! And ze best of ze joke is, he brought her to Egypt."

"Oh! then he's here?"

"Yes, *here*: zare is ze point of ze joke. Ha, ha, ha!"

The Q. C. couldn't quite see where the point came in, therefore he did not join in his visitor's merriment. Nor could he understand why the Pasha looked so meaningly at him every time he mentioned the doting husband.



"There is one point," he said, after a moment's reflection, "you must not lose sight of; you will have to prove the existence of the child."

"Ah, zat can be done, for ze girl is here."

"Oh, this is a remarkable coincidence."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Pasha, "it is; and Betsy is a remarkable woman."

"Betsy," exclaimed the Q. C. "Is her name Betsy?" something in the other's face alarmed him, and he suddenly felt a sickening at the heart.

The Pasha nodded, and again burst into an uncontrollable roar of laughter.

"I must leave you, my friend," he said rising, "but I can assure you zat I shall pay for your legal opinion with ze greatis satisfaction. Send ze bill to ze Villa Karava. It shall be paid at once."

Sir Richard had mechanically got up and was unconsciously pacing the room, his mind in a tumult of doubt and conjecture.

"Ah! you are lame!" cried the Pasha. "How did it happen?"

Sir Richard glanced sharply at him, wondering if this was sarcasm. Did he know, after all, what had happened last night?

"Eh? Oh, it's nothing—a—a mere touch of the gout," he answered airily.

"I hope it will be better—a thousand zanks for your legal opinion. Adieu!" And with a radiant but rather sinister smile his visitor bowed himself out of the room.

For some minutes after Le Zaras had gone, Sir Richard paced the room in an agitated frame of mind. He said to himself:

"There was no mistaking his pointed allusion to the



counsel—how he laughed when I called him an imbecile. The familiar way he used the term ‘Betsy,’ and the malicious smile he gave me. Great God! Can it be my wife! No, no, it’s preposterous! And yet she may have concealed the fact from me. Lynx and Lunx prepared her case; she may have imposed upon them. I was so fascinated with her that it never occurred to me to enquire whether she’d had a child by Le Zaras.” The mention of this name suddenly brought to his mind something he had not noticed before. The Pasha’s name was identical with the simple omission of the prefix Le Zaras.

“By Heaven!” he cried, “the case looks black, look at it as I will. She quarrelled with me over Sidney. She insolently refused to tell me where she was going last night. She has not returned. Can she, in a fit of anger, have gone back to this gross mountain of flesh? No, no, no! I will not entertain the thought; this is but the distorted reasoning of a feverish brain.” He threw himself upon the couch, and, with a mental effort, endeavoured to consider the matter calmly. Suddenly he bethought him of Elsie; she would perhaps by this time have received some communication from her aunt. He got up, crossed the corridor, and knocked at her door. Receiving no reply, he entered, but of course she was not there. He was turning to leave the chamber when his eye caught sight of the note which Elsie had received from her father, and which in her agitation she had left on her dressing-table. Thinking it might contain the information he sought, Sir Richard seized the sheet and eagerly scanned its contents. When he had done so, he abruptly exclaimed, “By Heaven! it *was* Betsy. She *has* gone to him! And Elsie is the child!” He read the lines again. “Do



*not be alarmed about your mother, she is with me. Your devoted father, Victor Le Zaras.*" "Yes, yes," groaned the Q. C. to himself, sinking into a chair, there can no longer be any doubt of it. She has gone back to him of her own free will. Oh Betsy, Betsy!" he pathetically lamented, "I did not think you would treat me like this," and he buried his head in his hands, utterly unnerved. "Yes, yes," he mused, "the Pasha *did* know of my doings with Runa—perhaps looking on all the time—and this is the crafty way he revenges himself. Oh, Dick! Dick! you *have* been an ass! Induced to give a legal opinion against yourself. And Betsy prefers this gigantic old porpoise to me. Well, well, it serves me right! It serves me right!"



## CHAPTER XVII.

## LADY BRATTLE MEETS LE ZARAS—HIS EGYPTIAN WIFE.

LADY BRATTLE had swooned when she found that she was hopelessly in the power of her first husband. When she recovered she was in one of the most luxuriously appointed chambers of the harem, with Nelly Shy tenderly ministering to her wants.

"Oh, Miss Shy," she lamented, looking wildly about, "are we still in this dreadful place?"

"Yes. But don't distress yourself. It's very comfortable, and a real novelty."

"Couldn't you bribe that hag to let us escape?"

"No. That hideous monster, Bateekah caught me chinning to her, and dragged her off; so we can't rely on her."

"Oh, dear! dear! how shall we ever get out?" cried her companion piteously.

"Don't fret! Don't fret! That volatile husband of yours will find you're missing, and, perhaps, make enquiries."

"But I did not tell him where I was going. Oh, Miss Shy, I shall go mad. You don't know the villainy of this man! Oh, why, why did you ever bring me here?"

"How should I know," said Nelly impatiently, "that you had a lost husband roaming about the world."



"Oh, how can you jest when you know you are to blame for all this?"

"Blame! Blame? Wal, I should say praise. For how could you correctly describe a night in the harem if you hadn't slept thar. You wanted to get here, so did I. It's like the forbidden fruit; we women can never believe it's bitter until we've tasted for ourselves. You've tasted and find it bitter. I must say I like it; it's a novelty."

"Oh, Miss Shy! Miss Shy! how can you jest!" wringing her hands in an agony of mind. "I——"

"It's no jest—it's business. Now," she said soothingly, "I advise you to simmer down and go to bed. That what I'm going to do. I don't let no Pasha worry me. Not much!" and Nelly coolly began to disrobe.

"Can't we burst this casement, and call for help?" asked her distracted companion.

"Try it," rejoined Nelly, calmly removing her stockings. "I guess you'll find it difficult. You see the window is latticed criss-cross, so that you couldn't drop even a note out if you wanted to. Now, take my advice and go to bed."

"Your calmness simply exasperates me," cried her friend. "You don't think of my compromising position—what my husband will think when he learns where I've spent the night!"

"Which husband?" asked Nelly drily, deliberately folding up her corsets, and placing them away as if in her hotel.

"Now, that is simply cruel of you," cried her ladyship, and then throwing herself on the bed she burst into a hysterical fit of sobbing.

"My dear Lady Brattle, I did not mean it to be



cruel, I assure you. Now, pray calm yourself, for you are not in the slightest danger."

"But suppose that monster should come here and insist upon seeing me?"

"He'd have to make room in his ponderous heart for a little piece of lead, if he did," was the confident rejoinder.

"What do you mean?"

"You don't suppose I'm going round the world without an escort?" asked Nelly, indicating a tiny silver-plated revolver she had placed by the bedside.

"Goodness gracious! you are the most fearless woman I ever met. Would you dare to use it?"

"Certainly I would, if the man attempted any reckless sociability. So, good-night, I'm going to sleep," and jumping into bed, the nerveless creole was very soon peacefully dreaming. Lady Brattle, on the contrary, spent a sleepless night of mental torture, starting up at every sound she heard, which she dreaded might be a stealthy footstep.

About nine o'clock in the morning, while they were still in bed, and as Lady Brattle was just concluding the narrative of her unfortunate marriage with Le Zaras, Zeyneb brought them their breakfast.

"Wal, now, this is real gentlemanly of him," cried Nelly, "for I'm hungry as a tramp. And I suppose this is the harem custom, eh, Zeney?"

Without any delay, the American made a hearty breakfast; but her companion ate nothing. As the attendant was leaving, she said the Pasha would like a chat with them *en famille* when they were at leisure.

Lady Brattle was at once alarmed and demurred, but Nelly said, "Now, don't be skeared. I'll stick to you like a porous plaster."



The unfortunate wife had begun to have confidence in her indomitable friend; so, after a little more persuasion, they dressed and descended to the reception-room.

It was a delightful spring morning, and a faint breeze wafted the odour of flowers into the room—the room which had been the scene of Sir Richard's capering the night previous.

As they entered, the Pasha, dressed in a magnificent orange-coloured silk gown, was seated on a divan, with Runa nestling lovingly up to him on the right and Lisba on the left. Nelly at once concluded this had been arranged for effect. They were evidently talking of the affair of last night, for the Pasha asked:

"But how did Ayros smuggle in this English dolt without your seeing her?"

The wives exchanged alarmed glances across his rotund stomach, then Runa innocently replied: "We can't imagine how."

"No," said Lisba; "for we were reading here——"

"When all at once we missed her," put in Runa. "Then went to look for her, and—and——"

"Hum-m? Well?" looking from one to the other suspiciously.

"We heard strange voices, and——"

"Were frightened, and ran and hid ourselves," broke in Lisba, looking as chaste and truthful as a Madonna.

"But there was another. Bateekah found his turban and gown?" said the Pasha.

"Yes, there were two," assented Runa, "because you remember, Lisba, one of them seemed to be trying to prevent the other coming."

"Yes, yes, I remember," agreed Lisba, "my opinion is, sweet father," stroking the old dupe's beard caress-



ingly, "that Ayros is innocent of any wrong. This brute was tipsy and followed and insulted her, and she fled, and—and just then you came."

This was the story the wives had agreed upon among themselves.

The Pasha did not seem convinced by this explanation and answered: "Well, she must remain in confinement until she confesses the truth."

"Wal, ain't he a peony—in full bloom!" cried Nelly, when she beheld the Pasha with a wife on each side of him.

"Ah, good-morning, ladies," said Le Zaras in French. "I hope you have slept well."

"Thanks, never better," replied the American cheerfully.

"And you, my lady?" he asked, with a sinister smile at his former wife.

Lady Brattle turned from him with a look of bitter aversion.

"That charming woman, my dears," he said sarcastically, "is my wife. She ran away from my harem in Burmah. Is she not superb for her age?"

"You know you lie, you vile monster!" screamed Lady Brattle, turning upon him fiercely.

"There, there, Betsy. If you wish to have one of our old enjoyable scenes, I must ask these ladies to excuse us." He spoke in French as he had been doing with his wives, and in that tongue the interview continued.

"I have not the pleasure of your name," he said, turning to the American.

"Nelly Shy, *Chicago Ladies' Journal*," she answered affably.

"I'm delighted to meet you, Miss, or Mrs. Shy?"



"Miss," said Nelly.

"Ah, you are a dashing woman ; there must be many disconsolate bachelors in America in your absence."

"I've never found one quite up to my size." Then, with a wink, she added,—“Now, if I'd happened to meet *you*——”

"Ah, you are lively, *ma belle*."

"And you are gay—as Solomon," she retorted drily.

"Ha, ha ! But you will excuse me ; I have not had a good talk with my dear Betsy here for many years. Runa and Lisba will show you the garden."

"No, no, no, no !" cried Lady Brattle "You must not leave me, Miss Shy ; I won't be left alone with this unscrupulous reprobate."

"Now don't you get rattled," whispered Nelly. "You've got to listen to what he says, and find out what he intends to do. Don't you fret ! I'll keep near, and if he attempts any familiarity, you just yell." So with this she sauntered off with Runa and Lisba and at once began to interview them on their experience of harem life.

"Take a seat, Betsy," said the Pasha, "and let us have an old-fashioned chat." His victim tremblingly complied.

"Now, you see, I'm more hospitable than you were when I called on you last year. You drove me from your house ; I welcome you—yes, with open arms, for you are the only woman I ever really loved with a lasting passion."

"I'll not listen to such language," was Lady Brattle's indignant retort. "What do you mean by keeping me here ? What is your purpose ? Let me go and end this farce."



"You came of your own free will?"

"It was all a mistake—if I had known you were in Egypt, I—I—nothing should have dragged me here."

"Now I thought you came on purpose to see me. Come, Betsy, confess you came with a lurking fondness for your doting old husband. Ha, ha, ha! Is it not so, my dear?"

"For you! I abhor you! I detest you! and wonder that I could ever have consorted with a being so vile!" she exclaimed with infinite scorn.

"Ha, ha! Betsy, I like that! You look handsome now. And you have the true fire. I'm tired of these amiable, yielding young women, who are always the same. Yours is the true spirit that compels admiration. Ah! You are wonderfully well-preserved. Yes, yes, you will do," he said musingly, gazing at her with longing eyes. "In time you will come to like me again."

"What do you mean?" cried the poor woman, his burning, covetous eyes filling her with shrinking detestation.

"I mean that you shall be queen of my harem."

"Never! Never! Never!" frantically shrieked Lady Brattle, "I'm divorced! I'm no longer *your* wife."

"You *are* my wife. The English divorce is of no effect here. You are my Egyptian wife."

"Oh, gracious Heavens! This cannot be true! You are trying to frighten me into submission."

"You will find it true. There is only one person can save you."

"And that is my husband?"

"No. Your child—our child—though you have denied her to the world, denied her to me. And now you would make her future miserable by refusing her



the love of a worthy young sailor, because you have a lordly suitor ready to purchase her."

She looked incredulously at him; how could he know this? He saw the question in her look and answered:

"Oh, I know the lover—Lieutenant Dane, a young hero—all that one could desire in a son. Does our child love him?" he asked craftily.

"N-o-o," she faltered. "She does not know what love is."

"My young friend tells me she does love him; and that you insulted and repulsed him." He waited for her reply, but with rebellious, imperious disdain she drew herself erect and refused to speak.

"Is it so?" he asked, his great black eyes flashing angrily.

"I will not discuss the matter with you. It does not concern you," was the defiant rejoinder.

"It concerns the happiness of my child; and, by the grave of Mahomet! she shall marry him if she loves him."

"Never! If he is an associate of yours. I would rather see her dead."

"He *is* a *azzociate* of mine, and he *zhall* marry her. And what is more, *you* *zhall* consent." This was said calmly but firmly, and with eyes half-closed yet flashing angrily.

"Never! Never! Never!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! Ah, yez, you will." Then, with an abrupt change of manner, he clapped his hands three times, which brought Zeyneb and Bateekah.

When the major-domo came and salaamed, Le Zaras said to Zeyneb with an effort at calmness:

"This lady is my wife. She will be queen of the



harem. She is fractious just now. Take her to her chamber; treat her with the greatest respect, kindness and consideration; but keep her there until she asks to see me." There was no mistaking his determined manner; his former consort knew it of old.

"Oh, Heavens!" she screamed. "Miss Shy!" Miss Shy! Save me from this monster!"

But Nelly was at the other end of the garden, engrossed with her interview, and so did not hear. Lady Brattle made a dash for the steps which descended to the garden, but Bateekah quickly seized her by the arm.

"Now, Betsy," said Le Zaras, "do not be foolish. Go to your room peacefully—and, when you come to your senses, send for me."

"Never! Never! Never!" screamed the frantic woman, as Bateekah, assisted by Zeyneb, led her away.

"Send Abloo with that Christian dog to me," said Le Zaras to Bateekah when he returned.

A few minutes afterwards, Lord Lashburn was brought into the great man's presence by the grinning Abloo. He had been confined in a dark, dank room at the bottom of the house all night, without a morsel either to eat or to drink. Lashburn, indeed, looked a pitiable object; sickly, pale, and bareheaded, his scanty, mouse-coloured locks matted and unkempt, his moustache drooping, and great pallid rings about his eyes. He still wore the Pasha's gown he had been disguised in the night before; he drew it about him and shivered with cold and fright as he approached the Pasha, who burst into a roar of uncontrollable laughter when he beheld the ludicrous woe-begone countenance of the hapless Lothario.



"Pardon me," said Lashburn, deliberately adjusting his eyeglass and scowling at his captor; "you will find this an expensive joke. I'm a British subject."

"Hum-m! a lord, I believe?"

"Yes, Lord Lashburn, of the Embassy."

"Oh! zo! zo!" with elevated eyebrows. "I did not know I had ze pleasure to entertain such a distinguish guest. You have breakfas'?"

Lord Lashburn sadly shook his head.

"Oh, you rascal!" cried the Pasha facetiously shaking his fist at Abloo. "How dare you keep a British nobleman wizout his breakfas'. Did you order it?" he asked of Lashburn.

"Yes; but the black devil only grinned at me."

"Oh, I have forget—he is deaf and dumb. A touzand pardons, my lord! He shall prepare you a breakfas' at once. You are famished, eh?"

"Yes, and parched with thirst."

"Bring ze wine, Abloo." He made signs to the mute, who went out and presently returned with glasses and a bottle of port. Abloo poured out the wine, and placed a glass for each of them. While they were drinking it, Lashburn thought to himself: "This is better treatment than I expected. My position has evidently impressed him."

"Zat feels better, eh?" asked the wily host.

"Yes, y-e-es, many thanks, many thanks!"

"Do you smoke?"

"Yes; but—I'm hungry."

"Enough. You shall have a smoke with me while he prepare your breakfas'. Pray be seated." Lashburn accepted a chair. With Abloo the Pasha then began a long discourse with his hands. Abloo smiled and disappeared. Lord Lashburn watched this panto-



mime with interest, for he thought it concerned his breakfast.

"You are very kind," said Lashburn, "in view of—hem——"

"Ze affair last night—we will discuss that presently," said Le Zaras, with a crafty smile.

"And without—er—rancour, I hope?"

At this juncture Abloo brought in two lighted narghiles, and placed one before each of them. The Pasha had been restlessly pacing the room; but he now seated himself on the divan, and, taking the stem of the tube, began to smoke reflectively. Lashburn followed his example. Waving Abloo to be gone, the Pasha observed:

"Very soothing, my lord, zis smoke, eh?"

"Very pleasant, my dear sir," was Lashburn's reply, puffing away complacently.

"Now," with a sudden change of manner, and looking keenly at his victim, "tell me who projec' zis plot to desecrate my harem?"

"There was no—er—exactly plot," said Lashburn, taken by surprise at the Pasha's altered tone.

"Don't attempt any swinish lies! You were caught in zat room with my wife. By Egyptian law any man found in ze harem may be killed without question. You know zat?" Lashburn's mottled visage blanched perceptibly.

"Now, my dear sir, I——"

"Do not call me Sare. I am a Pasha!" ferociously.

"My dear Pasha," faltered Lashburn, "let us consider the matter calmly—I——"

"To ze devil wiz your calm! Who make ze plot? I want to know zat?"

"My dear Pasha, let us consider this business—er—"



pacifically—I counsel diplomatic coolness. I do really! Now——”

“Ze devil take your diplomacy. You have outrage me!”

“If you will listen calmly—I—may be able to explain what was seemingly, a—a—well, a liberty, but I assure you it was a harmless platonic visit.” Lashburn puffed away at the stem of his narghile while he meditated on his defence with such provoking calmness that his listener could no longer restrain his pent-up fury. So sliding off the divan he stood threateningly over the cringing lord, and in a stentorian voice, demanded:

“Who—was—wiz—you—in—zis—plot?”

Lashburn shrunk into his chair, but the bullying didn’t hasten his methodical deliberation any more than a pin stuck in a turtle’s tail would accelerate its habitual movements.

“My dear Pasha,” he replied with a deprecating smile, “I really deplore your want of judicial calmness, but there was no plot.”

“No plot. Well—well!” impatiently. But the diplomat puffed away complacently at his pipe. “Well, well!” asked the Pasha again. “Who was wiz you?”

“Oh, I beg your pardon, I didn’t say there was any one with me,” with a cunning leer.

“Then zare was no one wiz you, eh?”

“I didn’t say that either.”

“Parbleu! What did you say?” cried the Pasha, with all a sailor’s impatience at circumlocution.

“If you will only have patience—you bewilder me, really you do——”

“I have patience! I wait—I wait!” said the Pasha, resignedly moving away and looking back at him as he



paced the floor with an expression which seemed to say: "This is the most contemptuous imbecile I ever had dealings with."

Meanwhile Lashburn was cudgelling his bewildered brain in search of a plausible lie that would not implicate Sir Richard and Dolby; for he had come to the conclusion they had escaped. But how should he account for the key which had been found in his possession? All at once he hit upon an idea which he thought would serve. The Pasha came up and, rapping the table impatiently, roared, "I wait! I wait!"

"Well, my dear sir—Pasha, it was all about a wager."

"A wager?"—dubiously. Well—"I wait!"

"Well, I bet Sir Richard Brattle and Dolby a case of champagne I would get into a harem. You see—you see?" with an effort to be jocular.

"I listen!" irritably, and watching him suspiciously.

"Now, Karava Bey, he——"

At the mention of this name, the Pasha looked as if he would explode.

"Ha! I have it, at last! *He* was with you!" cried his listener triumphantly.

"Pardon me; I *did not* say so."

"But *I* say zo. I have his gown and his turban, and his card in ze pocket of ze gown. Iz not zat proof?"

This was a revelation the embryo diplomat had not foreseen; it staggered him as much as anything short of dynamite could.

"Well, go on wiz ze story of ze wager; you bet you could get into my harem."

"Yes, yes, that's it. All for a lark, you see. Ha, ha, ha!" with a sickly attempt at a laugh.



"But you did not wager you would get out again?" asked the Pasha, with crafty, half-closed eyes, in which there was a fiendish glee.

"No, no. Oh, no," assented Lashburn, with questioning look.

"Zen you will win—for you will not get out again."

"But, my dear sir, you do not mean to say you will dare——"

"Pah! Piff! Pooh! Now confess that you admire my wife, Ayros? It is zo?"

"I do. I do—er—that is, her style is rather unusual," wondering what his captor was driving at.

"And zis Karava Bey, he came with you?"

"I did not say so."

"To ze devil wiz your 'I—did—not—say—zo!' I know. I have ze proof."

"But I assure you—though the circumstances seem—er—equivocal, my admiration for your wife was purely platonic."

"Piff," cried the Pasha, his patience now utterly worn out, for after all this parleying he had learned very little from the sluggish culprit. So he clapped his hands and Bateekah appeared, then turning to Lashburn he asked:

"Does ze smoke exhilarate you?"

"Yes, makes me awfully light-headed."

"Ah! zen it ees working well."

"Working well? What do you mean?" The unctuous smile on the Pasha's face alarmed him.

"With zat pipe you are—slowly poisoning yourself. Ha! ha! ha!" the animate jelly shaking all over with enjoyment.

Lashburn slowly dropped the mouth-piece and looked at him aghast.



"This is barbarous, sir! barbarous! You are a cold-blooded fanatic! You dare not—you——"

"You will next have a delicious sleep, zen in eight hours you will wake, your stomach rent with pain, and your head as light as a balloon—and zen—you *will die*. Zat is ze way we dispose of lords who break into our harems and cuddle our wives."

"An antidote, an antidote! I will confess everything if you will only give me an antidote," gasped Lashburn.

"It ees too late. Away with him, back to ze cellar—treat him gently—he *is a lord—a British lord*. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

As the protesting Lothario was led away, Le Zaras said to himself: "And that is the brainless thing Betsy would marry our child to. I'll frighten the liver out of him before I let him go. Ha! ha! But, *parbleu!* If I only had that Karava in my clutches, I would strangle him."

Nellie Shy came up the steps just in time to see Lashburn dragged off.

"Look here, Colonel," she asked, "what are you doing with him. What's he been up to?"

"I cannot attend to you now, my fair American. I have an appointment. Make yourself at home until I return. Adieu!"



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## LE ZARAS DENOUNCES KARAVA BEY.

AFTER enduring agonies of mind for some time, Sir Richard decided to send for Karava Bey.

When his friend came he rapidly told him of the calamity at the Villa Karava, and of their inglorious retreat, but hesitated to mention his wife.

"And Lord Lashburn did not escape?" asked Karava, with a grave face.

"I'm afraid not."

"That is bad! That is bad! You know I warned you to keep in the gardens."

"Yes, yes, and I did my best to keep them there, and together; but that susceptible idiot, Lashburn, became fascinated with Ayros and stole off into one of the side rooms—with the key of the gate in his pocket, too, and we had to scale the wall. Pah, the imbecile!"

"This is *very* serious. Did Zaras Pasha, when he called on you, mention Lashburn?"

"No, but he mentioned my wife."

"Your wife? What has he to do with her?"

"That is what I can't understand!"

Sir Richard could not find courage to tell him the truth, and what he feared.

"My opinion is," he continued, "the Pasha has by some means discovered I was there last night, and is holding my wife as a—a sort of hostage."



"But how did Lady Brattle get there?"

"That is what confounds me too."

"Don't you think he was lying to you, to frighten you into a confession?"

"No, not at all. I've seen a message to Elsie, which proves that my wife is with him."

"But did not Zaras hint at some explanation?"

"Yes, but with a malicious deviltry which I can't explain—even to you, my friend."

Karava Bey reflected for several moments, and with a face that was far from pleasant to look at.

"Oh, Karava! Karava! Why did you ever allow me to make such an ass of myself!" moaned the Q. C.

Karava shrugged his shoulders, and sarcastically said:

"For the same reason you took me shooting on the Scotch moors, with Scotch lairds, who ended the day by drinking whisky until they were mad, then danced on the table—and slept under it. It was an experience—I return the compliment."

Sir Richard could not smile; he was too sick at heart.

"Where is Monsieur Dolby?" asked Karava.

"I haven't seen him since morning," replied the Q. C. All at once it struck him as being rather odd that Dolby had not called again.

"He may have seen Lashburn," said the Egyptian. "Let us find him."

They went to the bureau of the hotel and made enquiries.

"He left with his luggage this morning," said the clerk; "he was suddenly summoned to the *Psyche*. Some one taken seriously ill, I understood him to say."

Sir Richard and Karava exchanged meaning glances, as they walked away from the bureau. When they



got outside on the terrace Karava burst into a roar of laughter, and said :

“He is a prudent surgeon that Dolby, he knows his business.”

Sir Richard smiled dolefully.

“What is to be done?” he asked. “Can’t you go and see the Pasha and learn what he knows, and what he means to do?”

“I do not like it. He is my bitter enemy—and I am his. He despises the English and intrigues with the French in all their political schemes. He has the ear of the Khedive just now—and might despatch Lashburn with impunity ; but I doubt if he would go so far as that. I do not like the mission, but I suppose I must undertake it—to save a scandal in the Embassy.”

“You will enquire about Lady Brattle?” asked the advocate solicitously.

“Had you not better come and discuss that matter with him?” with a sarcastic, rayless smile.

“Not till I find out what he knows,’ and —” Sir Richard was going to say, “whether my wife went to him freely or not,” but he checked himself.

“My dear friend, I will do what I can for you,” said Karava, and he at once set forth on his mission.

It was about four o’clock in the afternoon when Karava was shown into the presence of Le Zaras. They salaamed to each other and passed the usual empty compliment of, “Allah be with you,” then the Pasha abruptly and curtly asked :

“How can I serve you?”

Karava Bey had nerves of steel, but he felt instinctively that the Pasha was bitterly hostile, and this would be a difficult interview to conduct diplomati-



cally. He decided to come at once to the point and admit the truth; therefore he said:

"Last night—well, under the influence of wine—there entered your gardens three Englishmen. One of them——"

"Pardon me," broke in the Pasha, producing the card found in the gown Sir Richard had left behind him, "this is your card?"

"Yes, yes, certainly; one that I use at the legation in England"—wondering how Le Zaras had come by it.

"You admit it?" enquired Le Zaras, blue-grey with suppressed fury.

"Of course."

"Well, what would you? I listen," rejoined the Pasha grimly.

"One of them, an English lord, you have detained?" looking questioningly at the other.

"I caught him in my house."

"What is your purpose?"

"Oh," with a sardonic smile, "I have arranged to dispose of him—to my satisfaction."

"But he is an English diplomat."

"Then there will be no great loss."

"You will involve the Khedive with England if anything happens to this man. I demand his release at once."

"You! You!" contemptuously. "What of the other? There was another."

"Another? Oh, he means Sir Richard," thought Karava.

"Yes, and *you* know him. *That is his card.* Ha! ha!" continued Le Zaras fiercely, thrusting Karava's card before his eyes.

"Mine! My card! You must be jesting. You do



not suspect me?" exclaimed Karava in genuine surprise.

"Ha, ha, this is well acted! But you left it behind you in your gown!" Then, hissing between his teeth, "You were here last night, in my absence, and now you have the audacity to calmly face me and demand the release of your miserable accomplice. But I'll make an example of both of you! I caught *him*. If I had caught you, your festering carcass would now have been floating in the bay. Away with you!"

"This is the raving of a madman," said Karava, with a great effort to be calm. "That card is the most flimsy evidence on which to accuse me. I can prove, by my presence elsewhere, I was not here last night." He now understood why the Q. C. was not suspected.

"Pah! But your accomplice has confessed you were with him. Away!"

"I see it is idle to argue with you. But I will go to the Secretary of State—you will listen to him. This Englishman must be protected at all hazards."

"He has outraged the law of Mahomet; he must pay the penalty," was Le Zaras' rejoinder as he furiously paced the room.

"You will regret it, if he does. Now, mark my words——"

"You threaten me!" roared Le Zaras, stopping before him. "You! You contemptible renegade—who thrive by espionage, pretending to serve the Khedive—all the while accepting the bribes of the English."

Karava smiled as a dog snarls with dilated nostrils and flashing eyes.

"Leave my house before I crush you like a toad! Show him the door, Bateekah," thundered Le Zaras, calling his factotum.



Karava had no alternative but to go ; so, returning his enemy's look of hatred, he followed Bateekah into the hall. On the threshold of the doorway he turned and asked :

“ Have you an American lady here ? ”

Bateekah nodded.

“ And an English lady with her ? ”

The other hesitated, and then assented again.

“ Came last night to visit the ladies ? ”

The discreet servitor shrugged his shoulders, and smiled deprecatingly. But Karava had learned an important fact, and hastened away to acquaint Sir Richard with the result of his interview.

“ Your wife is undoubtedly there,” he said, “ but the American woman is with her. They probably went on his invitation to view his harem.”

This was but little consolation to the Q. C., for it suddenly occurred to him that his wife might have witnessed his wild antics with Runa.

How should he ever face her again if she had ! Then he bethought him of the exclamation he had heard. Yes, it was her voice, he was convinced of that, and his heart sank within him ; for with such an upbraiding conscience he could not now successfully play the role of the injured husband.

“ What is to be done now ? ” he asked of Karava.

“ We must go to the British Consul, tell him the truth, and see what he can do. He is a man of the world and will be discreet ; he is an old friend of yours, too, I believe, is he not ? ”

“ Yes,” said the advocate ; “ but I shrink from acquainting him with——”

“ Pooh ! There is no other course to pursue.”

So to the Consul they went, and telling him all (save



of Sir Richard's wife's former relations with Le Zaras), they had no difficulty in securing the Consul's intervention. Then he went with them to see the Egyptian foreign secretary, but he was in Cairo, and would probably not return until late that night, or next day, they were told. After this the baffled advocate went back to the hotel; but the indomitable Karava sought to confound and thwart his enemy by other means.



## CHAPTER XIX.

## HAPPINESS, BUT NOT PERFECT HAPPINESS.

As Sidney and Elsie drove in an open carriage out of the ancient city by the Rue de Rosetta, on their way to the Jardin Pastre, the handsome, well-matched couple attracted no little attention. Many a wretched fellah paused in his field-labours and watched them with a sigh as they dashed past ; and many a red-fezzed effendi and turbaned pasha gazed enviously at the ruddy young Englishman, and with covetous, blazing eyes at the brown-haired, brown-eyed, fresh-complexioned young girl at his side. Closely-veiled ladies of the harem, out for an airing, flashed by, and glanced with envy in their eyes at the elegant English girl's privilege of publicly showing such radiant loveliness,—a privilege which the denizens of the harem never cease to covet.

When they were quite away from the busy traffic, and were passing through an avenue of palms, Sidney could no longer resist taking the daintily-gloved hand, which lay in the girl's lap, and, letting it drop half-hidden between them, continued to fondle and press it with all a lover's ardour.

Elsie responded with unfeigned gratification expressed in her soft, lustrous eyes.

"Just to think, dear," he said, with a swelling, grateful heart, "that a week ago to-day I was on the deck of the *Psyche*, crossing from Cyprus in the teeth of a south-east hurricane, the salt spray lashing my eyes



and face and almost blinding me, the wind whistling and shrieking as if it would drag me into the sea. But, do you know, I scarcely minded it—I was filled so with the thought of you, dear, that over the seething, foaming billows, there always floated the vision of your sweet brown eyes welcoming me to Alexandria—and Sir Richard standing beside you. And now, dear” (with an ardent pressure of her hand), “all is peace and calmness; the sun shines; there isn’t a rock, or a shoal, or a bank of fog, on our sea of love. We are engaged—we were so before, as much as two blending hearts ever could be—but now we have the full sanction of your father, there is nothing to prevent our marriage—When must it be, dear? When must it be?”

“Why, Sidney, how impetuous you are!” cried the girl, and yet she rejoiced in it, and reciprocated every sensuous outburst.

“How can I help it? I’ve been engaged to the sweetest girl in the world for nine months—with love, love, love, welling up within me, and no one to tell it to, not even to a photograph—nothing but the white rose which you sent me by Sir Richard.”

“Oh, Sidney! have you kept that rose?—I meant it only as a symbol of my constancy.”

“Yes, darling. I’ve treasured it in a glass jar, which Dolby gave me for the purpose, together with some drug which preserves its odour. And every time I removed the stopper and inhaled the perfume, it reminded me of—the sweet fragrance of your blessed mouth—of the kiss in the boat, which filled me with undying happiness.”

“Oh, Sidney! Sidney! I’m so glad I sent that rose—you might have forgotten me if I hadn’t.”

“No, no, dear, there was no danger of that.”



As they drove along, there were frequent lapses in their conversation, in which the girl seemed to lose herself in serious meditation.

"I feel, Elsie, as if we were just married and were on our honeymoon," he said, with his old hilarity. "If you would only call me 'dear,' and steal a kiss now and then, the illusion would be complete—I believe the bride claims that privilege—does she not?"

"Oh, you stupid boy—I won't listen to such nonsense."

"Well, suppose *I* start with the kiss—the driver, I am sure, is dozing——"

"No, no, Sidney, don't be silly," she cried, pushing him and his approaching lips from her. "What would people think if they saw us?"

"No?—now that we are engaged?—But if you leaned over and slily kissed me," he urged, with merry, roguish eyes, "they'd think it was perfectly proper, and that we were merely on our honeymoon. Let's make believe we're on our honeymoon Elsie, dear; now, do!"

"You're getting frivolous, Sidney!"

"Call me 'dear,' or I shall insist upon the kiss," he said, with a mad threat in his voice.

"Well, 'dear,' there!" was the response, with a tender pressure of his hand. "Now let us be proper and decorous."

"How can I be decorous when you squeeze my hand like that," he rejoined, rapturously looking into her eyes.

"Then, I'll take my hand away."

"No,—no, no! I can't permit that," and he imprisoned it again.

By and by he began to note her moods of abstrac-



tion, and he felt that she had something at heart which kept her from joining and responding to his breezy happiness. So he said in a jocular tone, "A devoted wife will keep no secret from her husband—during the honeymoon, at least—she may after."

Elsie hesitated to reply, for she was debating in her mind whether or not she ought to tell Sidney what she feared about her mother having gone back to her father in a fit of pique.

Sidney ought to know everything, she reasoned; but if, by chance, it was not as she dreaded, and her mother was innocent of any wrong intention, then it would be foolish to acquaint Sidney with the matter. Thus she found it impossible to be as perfectly happy as her lover was, with the burden of these thoughts upon her.

"I have no secret, Sidney, only some thoughts," she answered.

"Oh," he said, "can't I share your thoughts?"

"Not at present, dear."

"Oh, that's nice!" Call me 'dear' and I don't care what your thoughts may be—*dear*," in the same boyish hilarity.

She smiled, and tried to respond to his joyous mood, but her troubled thoughts mastered her.

They had been driving an hour, when Elsie surprised her lover by abruptly saying: "Sidney, let us return. I want to see Uncle Dick. I must see him at once."

"Why, darling? He's all right."

"Yes, but I want to learn what papa had to say to him."

"What could he have to say—but to ask his influence with Lady Brattle in our behalf."

"I fear it was more than that. Oh, Sidney! I



*must* tell you. Uncle Dick and auntie quarrelled bitterly the night before last—because Uncle Dick defended you—and—and condemned mamma for encouraging Lord Lashburn. And mamma spent the night in my room—and last night she did not return home.”

“Where was she? I thought she went out with Miss Shy somewhere.”

“Yes, she did—but—oh, Sidney, I must see Uncle Dick! I know he must be distressed about mamma—and I want to know—that is, to see, what he says. I can’t bear to think of his being unhappy—he has been, oh, so good to me; always so devoted.”

The sun was dipping into the Mediterranean when they reached their hotel. Elsie went at once to Sir Richard’s room, and saw by his pale features and dejected manner that he was suffering mentally.

“Has auntie not returned?” she asked, unconsciously using the familiar term.

“Your *mother* has not returned,” he said, with a tremulous voice. “Oh, my dear, do not continue to deceive me. God knows it’s bad enough to learn that your mother has done so.”

“I did not mean to deceive you, Uncle Dick, it was custom, not intention,” cried the girl, hurt that he should so reproach her.

“Why did you not tell me of your father, then?”

“He has been to see you?”

“Yes.”

“And what did he say of mamma?”

“That she was with him.”

“And would not return?”

“He implied as much—and that she had gone to him of her own free will.”



"I don't believe that! No, no! I can't, though he is my father. I know how she received him at Oxley House."

"Was he there, too?" cried Sir Richard, in a fit of jealousy. "Oh, my God! how I have been deceived!"

"You have *not* been deceived. He came to see me. Mamma insolently ordered him from the house—and saw him only for a moment. And that is why I do not believe that she has gone back to him now."

"But she has remained away all night."

"So has Miss Shy."

"There is little consolation in that. If your mother deliberately went to him—even in a fit of anger——"

"But she didn't. She didn't. I will not believe it until she tells me so herself. She was foolish and cruel, and bitter with you, Uncle Dick; but I cannot and will not believe that she meant to do this. Nor will I go to rest until I learn the truth."



## CHAPTER XX.

## NELLY SHY PROVES A STAUNCH FRIEND TO LADY BRATTLE.

NELLY had been so engrossed in the business of interviewing Runa and Lisba, and so fascinated with the details of harem life which Runa, that babbling child of nature, had freely given her, that she had quite forgotten Lady Brattle, until she saw Lashburn being led away. Going up to the chamber she found her friend prone upon the bed, sobbing hysterically and bemoaning her fate.

"What's the matter, dear? What did he say?" asked Nelly, compassionately.

"He said enough," sobbed her friend, "to show me his diabolical purpose—to keep me as one of his lustful toys—another slave added to his horrid list."

"Oh, he can't do that! You were divorced."

"But he will—he declares the English courts have no jurisdiction here—and, I fear he is right! Oh, gracious Heaven! Why did I ever come to this benighted country!"

"Oh, that's all rubbish—don't you be skeared! Just let me talk to him when he returns."

"But it looks as if I had sought him—and he declares I did."

"Ye-es, that looks bad!" said Nelly, reflectively. "And it will look more suspicious to Sir Richard, I'm afraid, since you do not return."



"Yes, that is what mortifies me. I quarrelled with him, and he'll naturally think that I came here in a spirit of—of revenge."

"He will. He will. But what did old Solomon say? Couldn't you wheedle him over, somehow?"

"He proposed an impossible condition."

"What was that?"

"That I should consent to Elsie's marriage with young Dane."

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed Nelly. "Wal, I'm with him thar. But how did he know they were attached to each other?"

"He says Dane is a friend of his, and he's taken upon himself to champion his cause."

"Oh, I see." Nellie hesitated an instant, and then said boldly: "And so do I; for he's one of the nicest fellows, and one of the purest-minded I ever met. I don't see how the girl can help loving him."

"You, Miss Shy! You——"

"Now, don't stop me—hear me out. I knew of their attachment before I left Oxley House, and have seen what was going on here. Though Dane has never spoken to me on the subject, I saw that the young fellow had been rejected—and I knew Lashburn was the rival, and why; and I was real sorry for Dane, as well as for Elsie, because she loves him——"

"No, no, you are mistaken——"

"Oh, yes, she does. She cares nothing for Lord Lashburn—why would you have her? He was one of the party with your husband here last night, and was caught—the Pasha has him a prisoner."

"Goodness gracious! And Sir Richard too?"

"No. He and the other scalawag escaped. I learned that from Runa; but Lashburn was caught



alone with one of the wives. So you see what an accomplished rake Lashburn is, and what a genuine peer he'll become, with a little more practice; and what a desirable husband he'll make for a fresh, innocent, rosebud of a girl, and how happy they'll be, if she can only bring herself to regard the marriage-tie with the easy indifference he does."

"God forbid!" cried her ladyship. "But I don't think he is so vile as this episode would imply. Men are men, and we must make allowance."

"Will you make allowance for Sir Richard?"

"Yes. And I'll forgive him everything, if he will only rescue me from this mountain of lust."

"There'll be some difficulty about that, especially if the Pasha finds out that your husband was one of the party last night."

The persecuted woman admitted this, and, wringing her hands in helpless distress, she fell to lamenting, as before.

"Now, take my advice," said Nelly, "and do as the Pasha wants you—consent to Sidney's proposals."

"Never! She might as well marry a profligate peer as a profligate sailor. But she shall marry neither."

"Wal, how are you going to get out of here if you persist in this course?"

"I don't know! I don't know!" was the hysterical answer.

"I think you'd better agree, if only to outwit the jolly old monster."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, don't you see, you can withdraw your consent after your release—if you want to—and thus match perfidy with perfidy."

Lady Brattle, after some hesitation, assented to this,



and later in the day, when the Pasha returned from his consultation with Sir Richard, the American sought him, and said :

“ See here, Colonel, I’ve got Lady Brattle to consent to Elsie’s marriage with young Dane.”

“ Ah, zhe has come to her senses, then ; it is wise.”

“ Now I’m immensely obliged to you for your courtesy, and hospitality, and, if quite agreeable, we’ll take our departure.”

“ Her ladyship must first give me her promise in writing,” replied Zaras. “ A note to Elsie, saying zhe withdraws all opposition to her marriage with Lieutenant Dane,” said the Pasha, with a polite smile.

“ Oh,” exclaimed Nelly, taken by surprise. “ You insist upon that ? ”

“ I do, my fair American, for zhe might forget her promise, eh ? ” regarding her with half-closed eyes.

“ I reckon, you’re about right, Colonel, she might.”

“ I have seen my daughter, and her lover zis afternoon, and have promise zem her konzent,” he exclaimed.

“ Oh, you have ! Wal, that’s real nice, and I’m with you on that.”

She gave him an encouraging flash of her dark eyes, and continued :

“ You can bet your old socks I’ll get that note.”

Nelly went up to the chamber, and told her friend what her quondam spouse insisted upon, but carefully avoided mentioning that he had seen his daughter.

Lady Brattle firmly refused to give the note. “ It would be madness, I could never revoke it,” she said.

“ Oh, very well, then, I must throw up the case,” replied Nelly, moving towards the chamber-door. “ I



must leave you to fight it out with the amiable old walrus."

"No, no, no! Miss Shy, for Heaven's sake, do not leave me! Do not leave me to the mercy of this sensual octopus."

Nelly had really no intention of doing so, but she saw her ladyship was afraid to trust the girl's devotion for Sidney.

"Wal, you just think it over for half an hour, and then I'll be back. But, really, you know, it's the only way out. I'm going to find out what's become of Lashburn." And with this idea she sought the Pasha again.

"Lady Brattle kicks at giving the note, but you let her fret a while, and she'll cave in."

"I zink zhe will," said Le Zaras, "before I do."

"Now, see here," cried Nelly, in a business-like way, "what have you done with my reckless admirer?"

"Your admirer?"

"Yes, Lashburn."

"Oh, he ees your admirer?"

"Wal, yes; among a host of others, he claims to have the greatest admiration for me. I fancy, somehow, he followed me here last night."

"Ha, you zink zo?" Le Zaras closed his heavy dark lashes for an instant, and then abruptly opened his great eyes, looking into hers as if he would drag from them any deception she might be attempting. Nelly, however, met his searching gaze with cool indifference.

"But he was caught with Ayros," he said.

"I know that," replied Nelly, "he mistook her for me. Lady Brattle and I were watching them from that balcony—Ayros ran in there," pointing to the ante-



room, "and we started to come down and surprise him, when you came in."

This quite agreed with what Lisba and Runa had told him (as Nelly intended it should), so the jealous old reprobate was inclined to accept it as the truth.

"So you zink zare was no familiarity—no intrigue?" he asked.

"No, of course not; for he's as slow as a mud-turtle."

"He ees, he ees!" replied the Pasha, remembering his own protracted interview with the pondering diplomat.

"Why, it would take him a week to get his arm round her waist, and another to make up his mind to kiss her," observed Nelly.

"And you want to zee him?" asked the Pasha, glancing at his watch. "He will be please to zee you by zis time."

"Where is he?"

"In a nice cool room below!" added the Pasha, with a malicious chuckle.

"What have you done to him?"

"You shall zee."

He summoned Bateekah, and Nelly descended with that functionary to the cellar. The major-domo lit a lantern, unlocked a door, and led the way into a dark, musty vault, meagrely furnished with two chairs, a table, and a couch, from which there reached the American's ears the most agonized groans, grunts and lamentations.

Bateekah held up the lantern, revealing to Nelly the pale and haggard visage of Lashburn writhing on the couch, evidently in great pain.

"Good gracious! What ails you?" she exclaimed, approaching him.



"An antidote! An antidote!" deliriously cried the miserable Lothario, grasping his stomach.

"What for?"

"I'm poisoned! I'm poisoned!"

"What with? Quick, quick! What with?"

"Smoke," he ejaculated, gazing about him wildly.

"Smoke! How can that be? Oh, he's delirious! What's he been drinking?" she asked, turning to Bateekah.

That functionary only smiled grimly.

"Look here," cried Nelly, shaking Lashburn by the shoulder. "Don't you know me?"

He gazed at her with a bewildered, far-away look, and a sickly smile, then answered, "Yes, yes; but what are you doing here? Has the old devil got you, too?"

"Now, brace up!" she cried, "you've been dreaming—or" (to herself) "drinking."

"Yes, I have, for hours—and have only just woke up with the most hellish pains in my stomach. Ugh! Ugh! Get me an antidote, for God's sake!"

"What have you been *drinking*?"

"I haven't been drinking—only smoking. Poisoned with it."

"Are you sure it was poison?"

"Sure, sure! Can't I feel its insidious venom frantically racing through my—my anatomy! Ugh! Oh, Heavens! that I should die like this!"

"See here," said Nelly to Bateekah, "has he been smoking—or is this the ravages of delirium after a jamboree with the boss, who, I reckon, could drink him blind in half an hour, and still walk a chalk."

Bateekah laughed and replied: "It ees smoke. He smoke with the Pasha."



"Oh, I see, but was it poisoned?"

"Abloo prepare the pipes," said Bateekah.

"Yes, the black devil, and he poisoned mine," broke in Lashburn. "For the Lord's sake, get an antidote, or I shall be dead in ten minutes," he added, writhing about on the couch in evident agony.

"Give me that lantern," cried Nelly, snatching it from the grinning Arab, and, before he was aware of her purpose she had vanished along the dismal passage and up into the Pasha's presence.

"I want some mustard and water?" she exclaimed breathlessly.

"What for?"

"Lashburn—he's dying."

"Ha! ha! peacefully, I hope," fiendishly roared Le Zaras.

"Oh, how can you—how can you, torture the poor man like that? Quick! Where can I get some mustard?"

"Let ze imbecile die as befits a desecrater of ze harem."

"No, no! Now, I implore you—he is innocent of what you think—you know he is—you know he is!"

"You would save him—for what?—to persecute my daughter again?"

"No. I'll take precious good care he don't do that." All her womanly compassion now appealing in her voice and eyes.

"You are a sweet, tender-hearted woman," murmured the Pasha. He hesitated a moment, regarding her with an amused smile, and then said: "You zhall have your way. Come with me."

He led her to one of his menials and ordered her to supply what the American required.

"When ze lord has recover bring him to me," said



the Pasha, as Nelly hastened below with the emetic. "And tell Bateekah I want him."

Lashburn was still groaning and lamenting when Nelly entered his dismal chamber.

"Here, swallow this," she said, offering him a glass of warm mustard and water.

"What is it?" he asked, sitting up half dazed.

"Never mind—it's the only antidote I can get here."

"Are you sure it's not been tampered with—to make an end of me?"

"Don't be a fool! I prepared it myself—drink it quick!"

Lashburn eagerly swallowed the contents of the glass and fell back on his couch. Bateekah had gone up to his master and the bullet-headed Abloo had silently glided into the vault. Nelly was eagerly explaining to Lashburn that he must confirm her story that he had followed her there, when she turned and discovered Abloo beside her.

"Hallo!" she cried, "where did you come from? This is your work, you satanic superfluity!"

Abloo grinned and pointed with fiendish glee at his victim.

"Miss Shy," feebly observed Lashburn, "I'm awfully obliged to you—but I'm afraid you have come too late—I am dying—but I thank you with my last breath. Ugh! Ugh! Oh, I'm so—so—sick. I really think you—ugh!—you'd better leave me—ugh!—to my fate."

Nelly thought she understood the symptoms and prudently left the chamber.

"Now, have you written that note?" asked the American, when she went up to Lady Brattle.

"No!"



"And you don't intend to?"

"No; let him do his worst."

"Then, good-bye. I'm off. I've done all I can for you—I'm getting sick of this business. That dandy ex-husband of yours has poisoned Lord Lashburn, and I reckon there ain't much doubt of how he'll use you."

"Poisoned Lord Lashburn! Oh, Heavens!" cried her ladyship in a panic of fear. "You—you don't mean it?"

"I've seen the poor fellow. Good-bye! Sorry to leave you, but you seem to have a sneaking liking for the old Pasha after all."

"Oh, Miss Shy! How can you! How can you say such wicked things?"

"How can you be so foolishly obstinate?"

"I'll give him the note," burst out her ladyship, in a fit of despair.

She sat down and penned it at once; and when it was done Nelly sent word to the Pasha, and presently they descended to the reception-room, prepared to leave.

"There is the note," said Nelly, handing it to Le Zaras, "just run your eye over it, and see if it will do?"

Le Zaras slowly read the note, and then observed:

"Yes, it will do. Thank you, my dear," to his former wife.

"Now I suppose we may go?" said Nelly.

"*You* may go, my fair American, but my wife must remain with me."

"What!" exclaimed Nelly, "you mean to keep her?"

"I do. Ha, ha! Are you surprise I should wish to keep such a ripe and superb woman?" his eyes covetously resting on Lady Brattle.



"Oh, Heavens!" she gasped in utter despair.

"Now, see here, Colonel," cried Nelly, "this joke's gone far enough. You've no claim on her, and can't hold her——"

"Ah, zare you are wrong, my fair American. I have ze best of claim. She is still my wife."

"But she was divorced."

"Ha, ha, yes, yes," he laughed, "but ze divorce was not legal. I have, since I saw you zis morning, obtain ze opinion of eminent counsel. He tell me, Betsy," smiling at his former wife, "zat your divorce was not legal because ze English courts cannot divorce ze wife of a citizen of France."

"Pooh! That's all rubbish!" cried Nelly. "Who was the counsel?"

"Sir Richard Brattle, ze lady's illegal husband," he replied.

"You have seen him?" exclaimed Lady Brattle, grasping Nelly's arm for support.

"We had a pleasant and agreeable chat."

"And he told you that?" asked Nelly.

"Yes."

"And he knew you had her in your power?"

"No, but he soon will. You shall tell him when you return, zat zhe is now the queen of my harem."

"Oh, gracious Heaven!" gasped Lady Brattle, "is there no help for me? Is there no escape from this monster?"

"Now don't you get rattled," said Nelly soothingly, while supporting her friend. Then, turning to the Pasha, she asked, with angry, flashing eyes, "You are determined to keep this woman against her will?"

"Yes;" he smiled triumphantly.



"Then you will have to keep me, too; for I shan't leave her to the mercy of your lascivious passions."

"Oh, I'll make you one of my odalisques, too, shall I?" and he laughed.

"You'll find me the toughest odalisque you ever wrestled with. Now, you hear me, Colonel! If you detain me you'll be the sickest Pasha that ever wore a turban. I'm an American citizen—I'm——"

"But I do not detain you, you can go," he broke in.

"Not much, I don't go! I'm not going to have you lilly-twiddling round her, until I'm sure you've got a perfect right to—and don't you forget it!"

The American's dark eyes blazed with unmistakable fury, and Le Zaras began to think he had caught a tartar.

The more he had gazed on the still handsome features and majestic figure of his former spouse, the more his animal nature was roused, and he desired to repossess her. At first his object in detaining Lady Brattle had been merely to compel her to accept Sidney, to punish her unreasonable insolence to him at Oxley House, and to torture Sir Richard with unfounded jealousy. But now that he had learned from the Q. C. there was a flaw in her divorce, he determined to keep her as his wife at all hazards. But how should he get rid of the American? That indeed puzzled him.

"You may stay, my fair American," he said to Nelly, "but I zink by ze morning you will come to your senses. You keep her company till you do." With this he left them, and they went back to the chamber, but not without a long and angry protest from the indomitable American.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## KARAVA BEY OBTAINS THE RELEASE OF LASHBURN.

KARAVA BEY had not been idle. By a judicious use of the telegraph he learned that the Secretary of the Legation would return at seven o'clock. The British Consul met the Secretary on his arrival at the station, and within half an hour he obtained a document ordering the release of Lord Lashburn and Lady Brattle—"pending investigation of the charges against them"

After calling at the hotel and acquainting Sir Richard with his success, he drove to the Villa Karava, and again sought an interview with his implacable enemy.

"Now, what do you come for?" demanded Le Zaras, when Karava was shown in.

"This order from the Secretary of State will inform you," answered Karava, presenting the document with a triumphant smile.

The Pasha read it through slowly. "Hum-m!" he grunted, when he had mastered its contents. "The imbecile lord you can have—for I've done with him. But——"

"You don't mean you have murdered him!" asked Karava in alarm.

"You shall judge," replied the other grimly. "Bateekah, bring his lordship here." The eunuch left them to obey the command.

"And where is Lady Brattle?" asked Karava, "that document calls for her release also."

"She is my wife, and must remain here."



“Your wife!” exclaimed Karava.

“Yes, my wife. And therefore I ignore this order in relation to her.”

Karava thought the old reprobate had taken leave of his senses. He stood gazing at him in speechless astonishment.

“Do you know the danger you are running in this matter?”

“Bah! There is no law in Egypt to compel a man to give up his wife.”

“And you dare affront the Secretary by ignoring his command?”

“I do. He does not know she is my wife—you can go back and tell him so, for he seems to be ignorant of the fact.”

“This is some hallucination! She is the wife of my friend, Sir Richard Brattle.”

“Go and ask your friend Sir Richard if she is. He will tell you he has already given me his legal opinion that she is not. Ha, ha, ha! That surprises you?”

Karava gazed at him as one patiently regards a dangerous lunatic, saying as little as possible, lest he should provoke a more ferocious hallucination. He was now quite sure Le Zaras was mad.

“Here is your illustrious accomplice,” fiendishly cried the Pasha, as Lashburn was ushered into the room, looking as sallow, pallid, limp and lifeless as a cockney tourist after a two hours’ tossing in the Straits of Dover.”

“What has happened, my lord?” asked Karava, with grave concern.

“Poisoned!” gasped Lashburn, “if it had not been for Miss Shy’s timely succour I should have now been a dead man.”



"You would," said the Pasha, with an unctuous chuckle. But he knew better, for the noxious drug which Abloo had put in the bowl of the pipe was about as harmless as senna, though quite as active.

"Will you join me in another pipe before you go?" asked his tormentor mockingly.

"No, sir, no! I've had quite enough of your barbarity. Come, Karava, let us get away from this madman."

Karava required no urging; and as Bateekah led them to the door, Le Zaras burst into a roar of laughter at the hasty departure of the timorous Lothario.

Under cover of the darkness Lashburn reached his apartments, and at once sent for a doctor.

Then Karava went and informed Sir Richard that Lady Brattle was in the possession of a dangerous lunatic, who was under the hallucination that she was his wife.



## CHAPTER XXII.

## ELSIE CALLS ON HER FATHER.

"I CAN do no more for you until morning," said Karava, when he had finished telling Sir Richard of his interview with the Pasha. "Then I will call on the Secretary and tell him we have a madman to deal with."

The Q. C. even now would not tell his friend there was a diabolical method in this seeming madness. He groaned inwardly and helplessly; every now and then a fierce desire rose up in him to go and boldly demand the release of his wife, and then it died out again, as he bethought how he had put himself out of court by his folly of the night before. Then he groaned again in impotent rage, and restlessly paced the room.

"I am very sorry for you, my friend," said Karava, in genuine sympathy. "I know how you must feel while her ladyship is open to insult from this irresponsible lunatic. Good-night, I will see you early in the morning."

And so he left the great advocate to bear his troubles as best he could. Sir Richard sought Elsie and told her—as he had promised to do—the result of Karava's visit to her father, and how he persisted in retaining her mother as his wife.

"And won't you go and demand her?" cried the girl.

"No, my dear, I can't! I can't! For reasons



which—which are impossible to explain to you. And, besides, I am in doubt whether she sought him. If she did, she must remain there; she can never more be wife of mine.”

“But *I'm* not in doubt, and I will not go to rest until I have seen her. Whatever reasons you may have—I—I—don't know; but they are always so good and so generous, I will not question them now.”

Then with a resolution which astonished him, she said, as she began to put on her things: “Tell Sidney to get a carriage at once. I am going to see my father,” her soft brown eyes glowing with determination. “I cannot rest until I know the truth—which I do know—but which I believe is perverted and made to appear horrible.”

Sidney procured a closed carriage, and they drove away. During the journey the girl scarcely spoke except to explain her mission, she was so full of her purpose.

It was after nine o'clock, and Le Zaras was in the harem with Runa and Lisba, when he was surprised by his major-domo presenting him with Elsie's card, and saying: “The young lady insists upon seeing you at once; she is waiting at the door.”

“Show her into the reception-room,” said the Pasha, with a troubled face, and preparing to follow him downstairs.

“Who is she?” asked Runa, mischievously.

He hesitated, and then said bluntly and somewhat impatiently:

“She is my daughter.”

A ripple of incredulous laughter escaped from Lisba, which jarred on even his callous conscience.

“She is, indeed,” he said sternly, “my only child, by the lady who came here last night.”



"Oh, then, we must see her by all means," they cried in unison. "She must be a beauty."

"No," he thundered, "you cannot see her, or speak to her!" and he left them with a look which forbade them to follow.

"Why have you come here, *mon enfant*?" he asked, as Elsie came to greet him in the reception-room.

"Oh, Papa! Papa! Can you ask?" half-sobbed the girl. Then with a glance at Bateekah she said in a low tone. "Please send this person away; I wish to speak with you alone."

Bateekah vanished at a sign from his master.

"Now, *mon enfant*," said her father, placing a chair for her, and seating himself, "have you come here alone?"

"No. Sidney is waiting for me in the carriage."

"Why did he not come in with you?"

"Because I wished to—to talk with you quite alone."

"On what subject, my dear?" the Pasha asked, with an effort to conceal his uneasiness, for the girl's soft, brown innocent eyes contained a reproach which unnerved him.

"My mother," she answered softly.

"And what of her?" looking out at the moonlit bay.

"She is here with you?"

"Yes."

"And came of her own free will?"

"Yes," still avoiding her appealing tearful eyes.

"And is she remaining of her own free will?"

He hesitated, and then nodded assent.

"Papa!" said the girl appealingly, in a voice that became more and more like a wail of agony, "are you telling me the truth?"



He made no reply, but continued to gaze out into the radiant night.

“Oh, papa! If you are telling me the truth, what must I think of my mother—as—as a good woman who in a fit of anger leaves one man—whom God knows is a good man—and—and goes back to another? Ah, but I cannot believe it! You are deceiving me! Ah, say you are deceiving me!” Tears were now glistening in her eyes.

Le Zaras struggled with his emotion for a moment, and then said: “I *am* deceiving you, *mon enfant*.”

“Ah, I knew it! I knew it!”

“But I am justified; zhe has never ceased to be my wife; therefore I may detain her.”

“But not against her will. Oh, you would not, you would not!”

“I would, because zhe ees the only woman in the world that—that masters and subdues me, that compels my love and respect. It is painful, *mon enfant*, for me to—to make zis confession to you—but I would gladly give up my present selfish life to win back her affection.”

“Oh, papa! That can never be! Never! Put the thought from you. I know what a happy, contented life she has led with Uncle Dick. I know how she loves him—how he adores her—though they quarrelled—but it was for me he quarrelled with her. Oh, papa! if you knew how kind and tender and noble Uncle Dick has been to me, you would not wrong him even by a thought. He has championed my love for Sidney—my father in your place—he loves me almost as much as you do. And you do love me?”

The Pasha got up and slowly paced the room, his



passion battling with his holy, paternal reverence for his child.

Of all things in the world he valued her respect the most. She saw he wavered and continued: "If you detain mamma, it is just the same as if I had been forced to—to marry Lord Lashburn, and you know I should have lived a life of—of—oh, I can't say what with him! It is horrible! Would you have liked to see me the—the slave of a man I abhor?"

She rose and grasped his arm, and, looking up into his face, pleaded: "Oh, I implore you to think of my loyalty to you, and how you will destroy it and my happiness by destroying that of my mother. Think what will be said—think how it will be whispered about in society—how I shall be pointed at and they will say, 'That girl's mother is——'"

Le Zaras clasped the girl's tear-stained, upturned face tenderly in his hands, and kissed it reverently before she could complete the sentence.

"You need say no more, *ma chérie*," he answered, with a husky, broken voice. "Your mother shall return with you. I only impose one condition—that you must marry young Dane—take this letter, do not open it unless your mother refuses her consent. Marry him at the earliest moment—there is no telling what may happen. I wish you to be happy."

He summoned Bateekah and instructed him to tell the American lady and her friend that they were at liberty to go, but not to mention the presence of Elsie.

"I would rather, *ma chère*, your mother did not know of your visit here," he said, as Bateekah left the room. "They can return in your carriage, and I will zend you and Sidney to the hotel in mine."



Elsie understood the object of this, and, after an affectionate good-bye, she drove back to the hotel without seeing her mother.

“Wal,” said Nelly, as she and Lady Brattle drove up to the Palace Hotel half an hour later, “this beats all! I can’t understand it—unless the old Mormon got skeared at the prospective swoop of the American eagle. He didn’t even give us a chance to thank him for his genial, not to say fervent, hospitality. I asked Bateekah where he was, but he looked at me as much as to say, ‘That’s none of your business.’”

“I hope to God I may never see him again!” cried her ladyship.

“Wal, that’s a matter of taste. I should like his photo for the *Journal*. Ha! here we are at the hotel,” as the carriage drew up at the entrance. “What a lucky thing it’s dark, for you look real ghastly.”



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## HOMEWARD BOUND.

EARLY the next morning Sir Richard sent word to Karava that his wife and Miss Shy had returned, and that they had no complaint to make as to the treatment they had received at the hands of Zaras Pasha, therefore it would be prudent to let the matter rest.

Nelly Shy learned from Elsie that Lady Brattle had again occupied her own room, and that there had been no reconciliation between her mother and Sir Richard. So the American sought the Q. C. and said: "Now, see here, I'm to blame for all that's happened. Your wife had no more notion that we were going to visit the harem of her first husband than she had of meeting King Solomon. I planned the whole racket. I was with her the whole time, and if you'd seen the look of revulsion, abhorrence and contempt, with which she met the old rascal, you wouldn't have much room for jealousy. Why, she utterly repudiated him! Now, as for the secret about him and about Elsie, it's just as safe with me as if it was written on papyrus and buried in one of the pyramids."

"You're very kind Miss Shy; but I——"

"She knows all about that high old time of yours with Runa, she saw the whole fandango—but, I guess she'll forgive that—she's too thankful to get out of the clutches of that rollicking old Mormon. Why, in comparison with him, you must seem like a saint—a re-



formed one, perhaps," with a merry twinkle in her dark, bright eyes, "but be sure she'll keep you reformed in future."

Sir Richard thanked her for the generous impulse which had prompted this explanation, and the reconciliation with his wife followed in due course.

Before nightfall Sir Richard and his family were comfortably domiciled at Shepherd's Hotel, Cairo—where Sidney and Nelly Shy followed next day. And two days later they were on a P. & O. steamer homeward bound, it having been arranged, in the meantime, that Sidney should leave Her Majesty's service and claim his bride in the June following.

Sir Richard took care never to mention the flaw in his wife's divorce, and, like many a flaw in law, it was never discovered.



## CHAPTER THE LAST.

A ROYAL GAME, IN WHICH THE LOSER WINS A  
QUESTIONABLE PRIZE.

"So they have gone?"

"Yes, sailed yesterday."

"Dear me!"

"Did you come over to say good-bye?"

"No, no-o. I did not learn that you had all left Alexandria till this morning," said Lord Lashburn.

"Been asleep ever since?" asked Nelly drily.

"No, no-o." He twisted his moustache meditatively and then said: "Deuced queer her ladyship didn't leave any message for me, eh?"

"Not at all."

"How so?"

"She heard of your affair with Ayros."

"What beastly luck! Was she very much cut up? What did she say?"

"Nothing to me. She's absurdly straight-laced and severe about such trifles, you know."

"Ya-as, ya-as. Now I comprehend her silence," said his lordship reflectively.

They were in a snug, secluded corner of the drawing-room of Shepherd's Hotel, on the eve of Nelly's departure for Palestine.

"I'm sorry you've been disappointed in your journey," said Nelly, after a lengthy pause.

"Oh, I'm not exactly disappointed, you know."



"Didn't you come to see—hem—Lady Brattle?"

"That was one object—but it's perhaps fortunate, under the circumstances, I did not see her ladyship."

"And what was the other object?"

"To thank you for saving my life; for that beastly old barbarian, I am sure, meant to do for me."

"Oh, I would never mention that if I were *you*. I won't."

"But, Miss Shy—well, I had another object." He was regarding her with a look of admiration which she could not mistake, while his voice betrayed his earnestness.

"That rubber at chess," she said perversely.

"Yes, that was one thing; for you have gained two games to my one. Now I think I can equalize matters."

"I don't think so, but get the pieces and we shall see."

Lord Lashburn procured the chess-men, and, as they proceeded with the game, he asked:

"How long do you remain here?"

"Leave for Jaffa in the morning."

"Ah! Why are you in such haste?"

"I've finished my business here."

"Then if I don't win to-night, I may never—hem—get the opportunity again?"

"No," then she briskly exclaimed: "Check!"

"That's a premature 'check.' I interpose the bishop. You play a reckless, dashing game, and I try to keep up with your pace; that is how I came to lose the last we played at Alexandria."

"Well, take your time. Pawn to Rook's fourth."

"I mean to, and win. Not only the game, but——" abruptly checking himself.



"What?" her dark eyes confusing him.

"Wait till we finish the game. I have already the advantage."

"Check!"

"What with?"

"The knight."

"Oh, yes, I see. Out of check."

After about a dozen rapid moves his lordship cried, triumphantly, "Mate in three?"

"Mate? Fiddlesticks!"

"Yes, I announce mate in three."

"In three months, more likely!" derisively.

"That will suit me, if you will resign now."

"What are you talking about?"

"About mating. Ah, Miss Shy, I adore you! I—I simply regard you as the cleverest woman in the world. And I shall be honoured if you will become Lady Lashburn."

"Now, see here," said Nelly, "I should get riled over this if I didn't know the trial you've had the past week. That poison has evidently affected your brain."

"No, it has not, Miss Shy. I had some feeling for you before that unfortunate episode. Now it is mingled with gratitude. I believe it,—it is certainly unconquerable admiration."

"Wal, you don't want to hitch on to a globe-trotter like me?"

"Yes, I do, your life is just such as would suit me."

"It wouldn't suit you long; besides, I'm a despot."

"Yes, it would, I'd resign my diplomatic post and—and go with you. Its infinite variety, coupled with your infinite charm, would give me something to live for. Novelty is the essence of life, and in you I find it personified."



"Wal, I don't intend to give up my profession. I love it too well."

Lashburn perceived by this remark she was considering the matter.

"I think," he said, taking her hand and tenderly caressing it, "you had better consent to be my wife."

"No," she said rising, "*you* haven't had time to consider the matter. Think it over for three months, and then cable me."

"But, goodness me, where will you be in three months?"

Nelly calmly took out her route-book, consulted it for a few seconds, and tersely said:

"May first, care American Consul, Colombo."

"If I cable there, you will——"

"Reply punctually. Good-night!"

He timidly kissed her hand, thinking, as she glided out of the room, that she was the most dashing and brilliant woman he had ever encountered. The next morning when he came down to a late breakfast, he learned that she had gone. This rather discouraged him; but, on May first, he sent her the following message to Colombo:—

"Still of the same opinion. Will you consent to mate?"

"LASHBURN."

In twelve hours he had the following reply:

"Come on! Will finish the game here. I wait your next move."

"NELLY SHY."

THE END.

MAY 3 1934























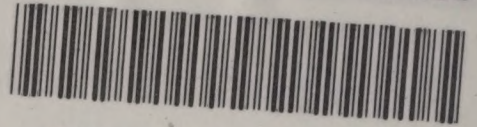








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